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clan affiliation, and succession to office follow the matrilineal line, and marriage is matrilocal with service performed by the bride-groom for his father-in-law as the essential element in the contract, not the transfer of goods. Associated with the marriage rites are girls' initiation ceremonies without any corresponding ritual in the case of boys. All these Bemba—Bisa—Lunda—Lala—Lamba peoples recognize themselves as being closely akin, and many of their clan names are found widely distributed over the whole area. They are sharply distinguished from the tribes on the Nyasaland border of Northern Rhodesia which have been dominated by the invasion of the pastoral, patrilineal Ngoni, who broke off from the main body of the Zulu, trekked north, crossed the Zambesi in 1835, and settled in the country of the matrilineal Cewa, Tumbuka, and Senga. They are also differentiated from those tribes of North-Western Rhodesia which were originally conquered by invading peoples from Bechuanaland (Ruhutse) and later from Basutoland (Kololo) to form the present Barotse kingdom, and from the Ila-speaking peoples in the Kafue valley, who also show strong southern influences, keep cattle, and combine patrilocal marriage and patriarchal authority with matrilineal descent. These Bemba-like peoples must also be reckoned in a different category from the cattle-owning tribes, mostly patrilineal, on the northern border of Bembaland, such as the Lungu, Itabwa, and Mambwe, which resemble more closely Eastern Bantu groups like the Nyamwesi to the north-east of Lake Tanganyika. For all these reasons we are justified in regarding the Bemba, Lunda, Bisa, Lamba, Lala, and even the Kaonde peoples, to take only the most prominent of these Northern Rhodesian tribes, as ethnically akin and possessing many characteristics in common. Of these the Bemba themselves are the largest and most homogeneous group and can be taken as representative.

Mode of Life.

As regards their general mode of living and economic activities the Bemba are, broadly speaking, typical of the Central Bantu, and it

Nyubunga (L. Lietard, 'Étude sommaire sur la tribu des Lualua-Kasai', *Bull. Soc. Royale Belge de géographie*, 1929, pp. 40–3), but none of these tribes can be reckoned as pastoral peoples proper. In fact the exclusion of the Congo tribes from the E. and S. African cattle-complex is used by Herskovits to demarcate them as a separate culture area. 'The Cattle-complex in E. Africa', *American Anthropologist*, N.S., vol. xxviii, 1926, pp. 640–4.

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is important to state at the outset how far any conclusions reached in this book are likely to apply to contiguous areas. Briefly then the Bemba live in small communities, the average village consisting of 30 to 50 huts, while that of the present Citimukulu numbers 150, and in the old days chiefs' villages reached higher figures still.[1] Each village is a kinship unit under the rule of a headman who is appointed by the chief of the district and responsible to him. It changes in composition from time to time, as well as shifting from site to site. The settlements are widely scattered and the density of the population never reaches a greater figure than 3·9 per square mile.[2] This system of local grouping resembles that of the kindred peoples of North-Eastern Rhodesia, but is in marked contrast to that of the Eastern Bantu tribes such as the Ganda, Chagga, &c., who live in isolated homesteads, from the smaller family kraals composed of a man, his wife, and his sons common in South Africa, or the larger Bantu settlements numbering as many as 10,000 inhabitants found, for instance, in Bechuanaland.

The Bemba have already been described as an agricultural people, though, like most of the Bantu, they are fond of hunting and fishing and rely on the bush for many of the wild plants and fruits used for food.[3] Their chiefs used formerly to capture cattle from the surrounding tribes, and kept these sporadically, but the Bemba lack entirely the pastoral tradition. Only a third of the Province is free from fly, and to-day neither chiefs nor commoners own more than a few goats or sheep, and occasional cattle in urban areas.[4] The people are shifting cultivators, that is to say, they clear

[1] Here as in other parts of Africa the establishment of European rule and the prevention of war has led to a far greater dispersion of the people than was possible in the old days when they tended to group themselves under the protection of their chiefs in large stockaded villages. At the present day the Bemba villages divide and subdivide as often as possible within the limits of the Government minimum of ten adult males. [2] 1·86 in the Mpika area.

[3] Herskovits considers that the predominance of hunting, associated with special guilds of hunters, and a well-marked type of ritual are characteristic of the Congo peoples, and this ritual, according to Maes, becomes more complex farther and farther west from L. Leopold. Herskovits, cf. footnote, p. 17; Maes, 'Notes sur les populations des bassins du Kasai', &c., *Mus. Congo Belge*, 1924, vol. i, pp. 74–82. In N. Rhodesia, the Ila and the Lunda of the N.W. province have hunters' guilds and the latter give hunters a special burial. Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of N. Rhodesia*, 1920, vol. i, p. 168; F. H. Melland, *In Witchbound Africa*, 1923, p. 267. The Bemba had formerly specialist elephant hunters, and now carry out ritual hunts, but it is not an important economic activity in this area, cf. Chap. XVI.

[4] There are 354 head of cattle in the Kasama area now, but these are chiefly

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a fresh strip of the bush each year to make their gardens, and when the forest land round their villages has all been used (four or five years) they move to a fresh site a few miles away, build themselves new huts, and start cultivating again. This general type of agriculture is practised over most of Northern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, large parts of Nyasaland, Tanganyika, and the less highly developed areas of Uganda and Kenya, everywhere giving place to fixed cultivation of an elementary type with the introduction of European cash crops, shortage of land, or urban development. But a recent intensive study of native agricultural methods in one area—North-Western Rhodesia—shows that the term 'shifting cultivator' can cover the greatest variety of methods of utilizing bush land.[1] The Bemba cultivate by clearing the undergrowth, pollarding the trees over a strip of bush, and burning the branches and brushwood so obtained on a small space in the centre of the cleared patch to make an ash-fertilized bed on which the seeds are sown broadcast without further hoeing. In subsequent years the gardens are dug up into mounds on which other crops are grown. This method, known from the earliest days of the British occupation as the *citemene* system after the native name for a cut garden, is practised all over this part of North-Eastern Rhodesia, and by some of the Lamba-Kaonde and Lunda-Luba peoples on the northern plateau of North-Western Rhodesia. It is reckoned as one of the most primitive forms of bush cultivation, everywhere associated with poor soil. As we shall see, the Bemba show great ingenuity in the alternation of crops and the use of the fertile soil of old village sites, yet as a whole their cultivation is much less complex than that of a number of the neighbouring tribes. They do not hoe their ash-beds before sowing as is practised by the Ila-Tonga group, use green manuring as do the Mambwe, or cultivate mixed crops in a series of specialized gardens and grassland fields as do some of the Sikololo-speaking peoples.[2] In fact, from an agricultural point of view they are reckoned as among the more backward of the Northern Rhodesian tribes.

kept by members of other tribes or Bemba who have learnt cattle-keeping in other territories. They are kept in this area since the sale of milk to Europeans is profitable.

[1] *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of N.W. Rhodesia*, Report of the Ecological Survey by C. G. Trapnell & J. N. Clothier, 1937. (Subsequently referred to as Report of the Ecological Survey.)

[2] Ibid. *Vide* also Unwin Moffat, *Native Agriculture in the Abercorn District*, Bulletin, Dept. of Agriculture, N. Rhodesia, 1933.

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The aboriginal crops in this part of the country seem to be finger millet, Kaffir corn, bulrush millet, Kaffir beans, Livingstone potatoes, and numerous cucurbits—pumpkins, edible gourds, cucumbers, melons, &c. Ground-nuts, maize, cassava, sweet potatoes and yams, all grown widely in Central Africa, are of New World origin, apparently introduced by the Portuguese in the seventeenth century. Bemba tradition confirms this classification. They declare that their first ancestor, Citi Muluba, travelled from the Luba country carrying in his hair the seeds of Kaffir corn, finger millet, Kaffir beans, cow peas, pumpkins, and the small wrinkled cucumbers known as *amankolobwe*. Their most important economic rites centre round the cultivation of Kaffir corn, now less often grown, quick-growing finger millet, cow pea, Livingstone potato, pumpkin, maize, and *amankolobwe*, and the ritual associated with any particular crop has often been reckoned as an index of its age.[1] Bemba maintain that they have grown maize and ground-nuts 'for a long time', that sweet potatoes were introduced by Swahili traders in the reign of a chief who lived at the end of the nineteenth century, while the Bisa, the neighbouring tribe to the west, taught them how to grow cassava.

Of all these crops their staple is the finger millet, a coarse tufted grass about 3 feet high bearing fine grain of the size of bird-seed on five or six radiating finger-like spikes.[2] This is a hardy plant specially suited to poor soils, but its distribution in Central Africa seems to show that Kaffir corn is grown in preference wherever the soil makes this possible, and that it has been ousted from its position as a staple crop by cassava and maize in all the more fertile environments. In North-Western Rhodesia, the only area in which native agricultural methods have been surveyed, the Lamba-Kaonde live on Kaffir corn and have relegated finger millet to a subsidiary position; among the Lunda-Luba in the same province cassava has taken its place as the staple crop.[3]

In the Bangweolu swamps cassava is the staple food, and on the Nyasaland border, the Cewa, Tumbuka, and others live chiefly on maize. Cassava is now the chief food cultivated in the Belgian Congo and only a few tribes such as the Yeke and

[1] Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, 1927, vol. i, p. 395.

[2] *Eleusine corecana*. This is the *mufhoho* of the High veld tribes of the N. Transvaal and the *popoko* of the High veld Mashona. In both latter cases it is grown for beer only.

[3] Report of the Ecological Survey, p. 25.

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Bunda apparently still live on finger millet.[1] Maize is the staple crop of most of the Southern Rhodesian tribes. In many other parts of Africa the finger millet is now cultivated entirely for the purpose of brewing beer, for which it seems specially suited, and is grown in this way in Southern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, the Congo, Uganda, and Kenya. Thus in their almost entire reliance on finger millet the Bemba are now in rather an unusual position as regards the composition of their diet. They grow less Kaffir corn than before because of the lack of suitable soil and the labour to protect it from birds. It is sometimes described as a chief's crop on the latter account. Maize gives a poor yield in this district, and sweet potatoes and cassava have only been grown widely during the recent locust raids in response to direct Government pressure.

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Material Culture and Economic Organization.

The material equipment of the Bemba is of the simplest. It consists of four implements, (*a*) a wedge-shaped axe blade (*isembe*, plur. *amasembe*) forged locally, fixed into a wooden haft, and used to clear the bush, to cut poles for fencing, hut-building, and simple furniture such as beds or storing racks, to hollow out tree-trunks for canoes, to fashion logs into drums, stools or mortars, or to hammer out bark-cloth; (*b*) a hoe (*ulukasu*, plur. *amakasu*), the only instrument used exclusively for cultivation, formerly traded from the Lungu and other more skilled iron-workers to the west and now bought at European stores; (*c*) a spear (*ilifumo*, plur. *amafumo*) forged locally and used for war, hunting, fishing, and protection against wild beasts; (*d*) a bow (*ubuta*, plur. *amata*) formerly used in war and hunting and important as a family heirloom, but rarely made nowadays.[2] All these implements are of the simplest kind, neither carved nor ornamented, and all arts and crafts are extremely poorly developed in this district compared to the contiguous areas. Iron-work, which reached such

[1] e.g. among the Kongo (J. H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo*, 1914, p. 86), the Shongo, Songomeno, Nkutsu (Torday and Joyce, *Les Bushongo*, 1925, pp. 131, 122), the tribes of the Kasai and L. Leopold (J. Maes, op. cit., vol. i, p. 6), the Ngala (Van Overbergh, *Les Basonge*, 1908, p. 197), the Luba (Verhulpen, op. cit., pp. 200, 307) and Torday and Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques*, p. 316).

[2] Small wedge-shaped razors, reaping knives, and flat 8-inch needles for threading mats form additional implements.

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a high perfection among peoples like the Shongo, Kuba, and Luba, and is practised to a greater or less degree among the Kaonde, hardly exists among the Bemba. Wood-carving, the great art of the Congo tribes, is limited among the Bemba to the adornment of the simplest and most utilitarian objects such as stools and drums. Bark-cloth was made formerly, but it has now been practically ousted by European cloth. Weaving as practised by the Shongo, Songe, Kuba, Luba, Pende, and other kindred tribes is unknown; and though baskets and mats are made, they are of the simplest possible design, and the Bemba are prepared to buy a better type of basket made by the Nsenga rather than attempt to learn the art themselves. Cooking- and eating-pots are made all over the plateau.

The economic organization of the Bemba is not a complex one. The strongest ambition of the old Bemba chiefs seems to have been the conquest of territory and the exaction of tribute from the surrounding tribes rather than the accumulation of material goods. Wealth among the Southern Bantu consisted in herds of cattle, which marked a man's status, enabled him to marry, to pay his fines, to make offerings to his chief or ancestral spirits, and to carry out all his kinship obligations, but the Bemba had few material possessions that could be accumulated as capital or used as any form of currency. Ivory tusks were the monopoly of the chiefs of each district and used for display, or traded for Arab goods, such as bales of cloth or guns, with which faithful warriors and subjects were rewarded. Beyond this the wealth of a Bemba chief consisted in the amount of service he could command as agricultural labour or military force, and the number of slaves, whether of his own tribe or conquered peoples, he possessed. Marriage contracts and most other kinship obligations were fulfilled by the giving of service, not goods, and enslavement was often enforced in lieu of a fine. No organized system of barter or exchange existed. Salt and hoes seem occasionally to have been traded, but regular markets which are a prominent feature of tribal life among the Eastern Bantu, and in such Congo tribes as the Shongo and Kongo, were quite unknown among the Bemba. We are dealing with a warrior people in which the whole economic system was dominated by the political relationship of subject and chief, and the organization of labour founded on it.

As regards its present economic position Bembaland must be regarded as a labour reserve. No economic crop has been found

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for this people owing to the poverty of the soil and the prohibitive cost of transport either to Abercorn, at the base of Lake Tanganyika, or to Broken Hill, the nearest station on the railway line.[1] For the same reasons white settlement practically does not exist, except in the region round Abercorn. Thus wage-earning possibilities are scanty for the natives of this area,[2] and to pay their Government tax, now 7*s.* 6*d.* a year, and to purchase the European goods to which they have become accustomed, large numbers of the adult men of the tribe—from 40 to 60 per cent.—are obliged to leave the territory annually to look for work, mostly in the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia, but also in the Katanga mines, Southern Rhodesia, and even South Africa. It is rare to find a man who has never left his country to work abroad, and the majority migrate to and fro between the mines and the villages and only finally settle in their home districts in their old age. Thus in this respect many of the food problems of the Bemba are typical of those that exist in all such manless areas in Africa, whether in Rhodesia, Nyasaland, or the Protectorates. That is to say, we shall have to describe an agricultural system in which most of the old incentives to work have disappeared, the male labour force is nearly halved, and the system of economic co-operation broken down.

Social Structure.

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It is impossible to describe in detail the tribal structure of the Bemba, either as a preface to this special study, or from a comparative point of view. There are, however, certain main principles of their social organization which are absolutely fundamental to an understanding of all their organized activities and forms of co-operation, and give the direction to their interests. Of these the dominant institution of the Bemba is their highly complex political system and the particularly autocratic character of the chieftainship on which it is based. Allegiance to a common Paramount—the Citimukulu—is the main tie uniting the members of a tribe that is scattered very thinly over a wide area. It determines their local grouping, and is the basis of the traditional pride of this warrior people and its distinction from neighbouring tribes.

[1] 3½*d.* per lb. from Kasama to the rail-head at Broken Hill.

[2] It was estimated in the Kasama district in 1934 that about 30 per cent. of the adult males could have earned their tax locally. (Provincial Commissioner's Report.)

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the end of January, but the rains continue unabated until the end of March or April. The rain is usually ample for cultivation purposes, although the heaviest fall may come at an inconvenient time for the Bemba staple crop.

The wet season is followed by a dry and windy season which lasts from April to July. During these months dry, gusty winds blow almost continuously, and the temperature falls to a minimum in July (between 51° and 77°). The nights are unpleasantly chilly, with ground frost in specially high districts. The rivers begin to recede. These are the harvest months, and the season in which the new millet gardens are prepared.

Bemba cultivation is entirely dependent on this type of rainfall and is limited in most cases to the production of one crop a year instead of two as in those parts of Tanganyika where there is a double rainy season.

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262 vegetables fresh since they live in an area with a more or less continuous rainfall. On the other hand, one of the neighbouring [171] groups, a branch of the Ngoni tribe which trekked up north to this district from a rainless area in South Africa, continues to dry and store most of their vegetables although it is plainly no longer necessary for them to do so.

262 753 827 A good many foods are recognized as causing digestive troubles, but not necessarily avoided on that account. Hiccoughs, heartburn, sickness, stomach pains, and diarrhoea are all considered possible results of wrong feeding, although these symptoms may point to other troubles as well. For instance, forms of syphilis (*akaswende*) are believed to be due to 'things that are bad and black in the stomach' (*ifintu fibi fyafita ku munda*), and thought to be cured by strong emetics which cause the patient to vomit up the evil matter. But in so far as diet is responsible for ill health, a native will admit in cold blood that bad food, sour porridge, a sudden excess of meat, or fresh maize eaten off the cob, will produce 'pain over the heart', even though when the time comes he will not be proof against the temptation to eat them. In most cases he may have nothing better to eat, or may feel loath to throw away anything remotely speaking edible. Even an educated Bemba defended the use of putrefying meat by saying, 'Yes, it will give me diarrhoea, but that will be better than throwing the meat away'. When the new maize ripens, the people bolt the cooked grain, stripping four or five cobs at a time. I have seen them sit rocking to and fro with indigestion saying, 'Yes, it hurts on the heart, but we are glad because we are saved from hunger. The new food has come.' Natives say that sick people and children should be given gruel (*umusunga*) and soft food instead of *ubwali*, but the latter at any rate eat what they want. Gastric troubles are bound to be received with greater resignation than in our community in an area where alternative diets for weak digestions practically do not exist.

Tastes, Cravings, and Preferences.

262 Apart from grading their foodstuffs in the order of what they believe to be their nutritive value, the Bemba recognize linguistically certain tastes, and also definite cravings for specific foods probably associated with the deficiencies in their diet.

(*a*) *Tastes.* Bemba foods are not highly flavoured. Of some

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dishes they use the word *ukukauka*, meaning to be sharp and acid, like lemon-juice, in the mouth,[1] but very few acid fruits were eaten before the introduction of different citrus trees by the white man. Children eat lemons unsweetened and enjoy the bite of the acid, unlike most Europeans. The word *ukusasa* is used of foods that have gone sour or fermented, like beer a few days old, while *ukulula* describes the bitter taste of some of the wild spinaches which the women try to make more palatable with the addition of potash salts (*ifishikisa*) prepared from bush plants or ground-nut sauce. Sweet foods, in the sense of those with a sugary taste, are rare, though honey is sometimes found and is considered a great delicacy, and the stalk of the sweet sorghum (*icisale*) is chewed by children. The fruit of the *umupundu* and the *umusuku* trees are also sweetish. But sweetness in the sense that we understand it is not a term that could be applied to any Bemba dish, and the word *ukuloa* which is used to translate the English 'sweet' really means to be pleasant or palatable. Sugar becomes almost a necessity when natives have become accustomed to it, and the children brought up in urban areas where it is the fashion to use it, find it impossible for a time to eat *ubwali* without it when they are sent back to their own villages.[2] Strong tastes such as ginger root, peppermint, aromatic or hot flavours apparently do not exist, except for the pepper known as *mpilipili*, which is occasionally dried and used as a relish and described as making the mouth hot.[3] In fact, strong tastes are definitely not characteristic of Bemba diet.

(*b*) *Salt hunger*. Of the special cravings recognized by the Bemba the longing for salt is probably the most pronounced. Salt has always been hard to get in this country, and meat and other foods richly supplied with it are rare. In the old days the natural salt found in the pans at Mpika[4] and crystallized out into roundish lumps was among the few goods traded about the country. These salt balls were valued so highly that they were used as tribute to be given to chiefs, who themselves distributed them as rewards to faithful followers. To a certain extent they do so still. The process of evaporating salt from river grasses is

[1] E. B. H. Goodall adds 'salty': *Some Wemba Words*, p. 44.

[2] It is interesting to note that honey is considered bad for a sick person because it 'makes the heart beat fast'.

[3] This is in marked difference to W. African diets, where most dishes of stew are highly seasoned with peppers of different kinds.

[4] Cf. Appendix B for composition.

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264 dry as if there wasn't any saliva in them'.[1] It is very important
[271] to natives to get the right proportion of relish to porridge. Every one wants to get as much relish as possible, and here the rules of
264 procedure are fixed. An old man may tear off a lump of *ubwali* and
488 make it into a hollow spoon. This he will dip into the liquid relish
882 and then pick up as much relish as possible (*ukuleme nkondwa*). The child, or inferior, may only just dip the porridge into the relish to moisten it (*ukutumpika*), and thus the proportion of vegetable varies very much according to age. A young man will not dare *ukuleme nkondwa* until he is given the permission by his father, said to be granted when the boy is able to do a full day's work in the gardens. A girl should wait the invitation of her mother before trying to take an adult portion of relish, and on the few occasions
[562] when a wife eats with her husband, in the privacy of their hut at night, she is supposed merely to dip her porridge in the stew like a child, until she reaches middle or old age when, among the Bemba, all sex disabilities seem to disappear.

264 Bemba eating customs can therefore be said to differ considerably from our own, both as regards the rhythm of meals, the regularity of daily intake, and the serving and rate of consumption, but in each case the manner of eating is just as precisely defined by cultural rule and related as strictly to the general economic system and social grouping of the people concerned. Even the proportion of liquid to solid, or relish to porridge, is prescribed by etiquette.

Beer Drinking.

273 Bemba beer (*ubwalua*) is one of their most important foodstuffs.
[146] It is made from the staple cereal itself.[2] It is a valuable source of vitamin B in which the diet is otherwise deficient.[3] On the day when it is drunk very few natives eat any other form of food, and some individuals, mostly chiefs, subsist on it entirely from day to day. But *ubwalua* is far more than a mere food. It is the people's only kind of entertainment, the chief break in the monotony of

[1] Information collected by Mrs. Gore-Browne.

[171] [2] The Bantu peoples make beer from a number of different sources according to their environment, eleusine, Kaffir-corn, maize, cassava, bananas, honey, and, in the Congo, wine from palms and sugar-cane. The Bemba preference for millet beer is shared by a number of people such as the Bisa (of the swamps), or the Venda of the Transvaal (H. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p. 35) who grow the cereal specially for the purpose.

[3] Kaffir beer is included as part of the rations issued to mine-workers on the Rand scale chiefly for this reason.

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inside marking, or widespread education in counting the number of baskets put in and taken out, would make foresight more possible, and probably act indirectly as an incentive to increased production.

To conclude, the Bemba system of storage[1] allows them to keep their staple crop for a period of about a year, but is hardly efficient enough to make it possible to accumulate for longer periods. Their type of granary, combined with their system of calculation, prevents them from estimating with European precision the size of their crop. They know methods of preserving most of their accessory foodstuffs, however tasteless the results of the process. But in actual fact only very insignificant quantities of legumes and other vegetables are stored, and the people are still largely dependent on the bush for relishes, except in the months immediately after harvest.

The Bemba Kitchen

Bemba methods of cookery depend on their type of fire-place and their cooking vessels. All heating is done over an open wood fire burning slowly on the floor of the hut with no chimney to draw up the smoke. The cooking vessels are placed directly over the fire supported on three conical clay stands (*amaphwasa*) about 1 foot high and 9 inches in diameter cemented on to the floor.

Bemba cooking vessels consist of open earthenware pots of various sizes and shapes which the enamel saucepans of the Europeans are only gradually beginning to oust. The largest pot used for making *ubwali* is known as an *inongo*. It is a big round vessel with an open mouth about 2 feet in diameter, but narrowing in slightly to form a neck. Each housewife reckons to have two or three *inongo* for cooking, but they are too heavy to carry to the river for water. For this purpose she uses a smaller pot with a narrower neck known as a *umutondo*. She may also cook stews in such a pot or in the little bowls about 9 inches in diameter known

[1] Other methods of storage are found among a number of the Central African tribes, e.g. the Ila build granaries on the walls of their huts with clay grain receptacles on the platforms (Smith and Dale, op. cit., vol. i, p. 121). Some of the Luba tribes in the Congo also build grain stores inside the hut, but keep maize and legumes outside on platforms on trees in grass containers (P. Colle, *Les Baluba*, 1913, p. 133). The Akele also store food in bundles tied to high platforms built in the centre of the village and thus protect the food from rats and mice (*Les Bushongo*, Torday and Joyce, 1925, p. 91).

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right proportion of flour to water is apparently gained by experience, and no woman could give me a clear account of her reasons for measuring out what she did. To stir the porridge one of the big flat spoons (*miko*), about 2½ feet high, is first dipped in hot water, and then plunged into the seething mass of porridge. It must be held with two hands, the left at the top and the right near the blade, so that the heavy mass of porridge is moved with the whole weight of the body. This is arduous work and the interior of the porridge is sometimes hardly cooked, especially when a young girl cooks for large numbers. The process is complete in two or three minutes, and great lumps of *ubwali*, now brown and smooth and solid, are scraped off the *miko* into the eating baskets. Here they should be patted smooth with the stirrer into balls like plum puddings (*ukumeta*), a point on which the housewife prides herself.

The process of preparing maize flour is very different and reckoned by the Bemba as a troublesome one. The maize cobs must be pounded for long periods in a mortar before the grains become detached. They are then repounded and the product finally ground into flour with the grindstone. This is the ordinary method used by the women of most of the Nyasaland tribes and in Southern Rhodesia, who never seem to complain of the work. The fact that the Bemba are reluctant to use maize flour probably depends on a number of different factors, viz. their preference for porridge made of millet, the low yield of maize on this particular soil, and the unaccustomed nature of the work, rather than its inherent difficulty.

The preparation of cassava flour is a three- or four-day process and therefore alters the whole household routine. To make cassava flour the roots are dug from the beds as they are wanted and roughly peeled so that the shells come off, much of the vegetable being wasted by the Bemba in this way.[1] The inner part of the root must now be soaked. The bitter cassava contains, as is well known, hydrocyanic acid, but the natives do not apparently recognize the plant as being poisonous. Bemba say that some roots taste bitter, and that these are dangerous, but that it is one particular plant at fault, not the rest. Children are often given cassava to chew raw and no ill results are expected. In fact, among the neighbouring Bisa, unsoaked cassava (*kapango*) is sometimes

[1] Bisa scrape it more economically.

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252 [171] pounded and added to the flour made from soaked cassava (*bwabi*) and no evil results apparently follow.[1]

Cassava roots are put to soak in streams or rivers 'until they are soft', i.e. usually two days in hot weather and four days in cold. The roots are then taken home in baskets, chopped, and dried in the sun. After this the lumps of cassava must be pounded in mortars into flour.

This detailed account of the making of different types of flour has a certain practical importance. In any society, living on a subsistence level, the preparation of the staple food must determine the routine of the household. The baking of bread was once the most important activity in our own kitchens and the work of the week was organized round the baking days. It is obvious that the Bemba method of making millet porridge fixes cooking on a day-to-day basis, and these people only use cassava flour as an extra or substitute. But among the Bisa and other neighbouring tribes, cassava is the staple food and household routine is therefore fixed on a four- to six-day basis to allow of the soaking of the roots. Thus the cassava user must look ahead. She must always have some roots soaking, others drying, others being pounded into flour. She must calculate for the probable arrival of visitors. The Bemba cook is not used to planning ahead. No wonder she considers cassava flour unsatisfactory as a staple food.

Relishes.

The Bemba have a number of different ways of cooking relishes and these are listed at the end of the book (p. 406, Table A). As we have seen, the kitchen equipment of the native woman only permits her to boil or stew, and the different dishes used as relish, which she distinguishes with separate names, usually have the same composition but are stewed for a shorter or longer time, or with the addition of more or less water. *Ukuipika*, the word for

[1] Mr. T. S. L. Fox-Pitt tells me that the Balunda of Mwinilunga district, N. Rhodesia, recognize a poisonous variety of cassava, i.e. *mulunga*, and say that if roots taste bitter when raw it must not be eaten. Otherwise drunkenness, staggering, and then vomiting will result. Death follows if the man has not been able to vomit up enough of the poison. The Baunga of Luwinga district state that some wizards can bury a medium (*amakayi*) in the centre of a cassava garden and so produce withering and decay of limbs in those that eat the roots from that patch. The leaves of cassava are eaten by Bemba and Bisa and some cases of illness have been reported among the former as the result.

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free to eat the foods she has cooked for him.[1] After a period varying anything from five to fifteen years he is ceremoniously admitted to his wife's family (*ukumuingishya*) 'to make him enter in', and after this feast and dance the keeping of the in-law taboos is at an end. This rite takes place when the marriage appears absolutely stable and two or more children have been born, and the ceremony is no mere picturesque survival at the present day. The early years of Bemba marriage are a genuine period of trial, and fathers-in-law do not hesitate to refuse to admit their daughter's husbands into their family if the latter have not won their full approval. I heard of a case in which a man performed the *ukuingishya* ceremony for his youngest son-in-law after a period of two years, because he was a steady, likeable fellow, but postponed the rite for ten in the case of his eldest daughter's husband who was less dependable. It is only when husbands are scarce, under modern conditions of absentee labour, that fathers are afraid to exert their jurisdiction over their sons-in-law in the traditional way.

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The Symbolism of Cooked Food.

The feeding of the *shifyala* is not only one of the economic obligations of the marriage contract, but part of the complicated pattern of etiquette prescribed between the bridegroom and his wife's family. It is, in fact, one of those instances in which the giving and receiving of cooked food has become symbolic of the legal or economic relationship which entails it. It is particularly important to notice that the preparation of porridge and relish is the woman's most usual way of expressing the correct kinship sentiment towards her different male relatives, for this actually affects the distribution of food in the community. The case of the son-in-law is characteristic.

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The Bemba custom of sending food to the son-in-law, *ukutebeta shifyala*, with all the ceremonial that surrounds it, is one of the essential elements of the prescribed etiquette between the wife's family and that of the husband. The young son-in-law may be an outsider and a nobody in some respects, but he must be treated

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[1] The full series of ceremonies are rarely performed nowadays, but the son-in-law will probably be made ritually free of one or two of the chief foods. Compare the observance of the *Hlonipa* customs of avoidance by the Zulu bride, coming to live in her husband's village according to the principles of patrilocal marriage, and the ceremonial by which she is gradually made free to drink the milk in the kraal of her relatives by marriage.

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A man helps his sister and her children by cutting them gardens or giving them uncooked food, but not by inviting them to share in the daily meals.

The men's group based on the matrilocal system is smaller and less closely knit. Between the sons-in-law attached to one household there is a feeling of close friendship and familiarity. These young men eat and work together, and the term *Ciufi munandi*, 'the man who married with me', or into the same family, is one of affection and good fellowship. There are no taboos between a man and his wife's sisters. He laughs and jokes with them because he may one day marry them, and he works in their gardens if they need help. But the young husbands often come from different villages and clans, and will want, as soon as they can, to have gardens of their own and perhaps to take their wives back to their villages. In the same way there may be co-operation from time to time between an old man and one of his own young kinsmen, such as his grandson or maternal nephew, but these also come and go, marry in other villages, and get work with Europeans. This group does not remain in close association throughout life as do the women of the matrilocal group, whether the latter remain in the same village or not.[1] This fact has important bearings at the present time. Though the unit of male labour is often non-existent, with the absence of so many of the men at the mines, the domestic and gardening economy of the women remains for the most part intact, and there seems no doubt that women deserted for months or even years by their husbands are more happily placed in a matrilocal community than in a patrilocal one.[2]

The Value of the Cooking Team.

The practical results of this type of domestic economics should be considered, since it is apparently one that is likely to change

[1] One legal case concerned a young married woman, one of six sisters, real or classificatory, who had lived in the same village and worked so happily together that when her husband removed her to his own village after the necessary years of service, she could not bear to live away from her family. The contrast between the cheerful female group in her own village and her relative isolation in her husband's community was too great. She ran back home for the third time during my stay at the village (Pambalasa, 1930). Divorce was the final result. Such a case is an extreme instance of the female solidarity which is so marked in a matrilocal tribe of this kind.

[2] Dr. Margaret Read confirms this on the basis of a comparative study between the patrilocal Ngoni and the matrilocal Chewa of Nyasaland.

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strip of bark-fibre, and not by the use of mathematical units. They do not attempt to measure the length of garden, merely distinguishing between a big garden and a small one. Their estimation of walking distances is notoriously misleading, since here subjective factors intervene, and they not only give the answers calculated to cheer or depress the European with them, but also themselves count a difficult journey, or one usually undertaken by loaded men, as actually longer than an easy one.

No attempt is made to measure weight, although the Bemba have a shrewd sense of the carrying power of the different members of their family. They estimate capacity by means of the different receptacles commonly used in the household. These vary in accuracy. The carrying-baskets (*umuseke*, plur. *imiseke*) containing about 50lb. of grain, probably vary from 10 to 15lb., while the eating-baskets (*icipe*, plur. *ifipe*) containing about 6lb. are probably more uniform in size. Granaries differ markedly in capacity, and the measurement of the contents of these grain bins has been shown to be exceedingly difficult, both because of the opacity of the walls and the unequal lengths between the binding withes.[1]

Nevertheless these difficulties of estimating weight and capacity could probably be overcome if there was sufficient need to do so. In fact, however, the owner of a granary usually considers it quite unnecessary to assess its contents. The people do not count the number of baskets which they put into the *ubutala*, and in a village where I asked each man how many baskets he had reaped, the estimates given me varied from one extreme to another, and were completely inaccurate in the only cases where they were tested. I only met one native who had attempted to measure the contents of his grain bin. He was an exceedingly intelligent, enterprising man who had worked on a farm in Southern Rhodesia, owned a motor-bicycle and the first plough seen in the area, and was, besides, a very good tailor. He had started to reckon the number of baskets put in an unusually large granary with a tally of beans on the ground, but even he gave up the attempt after the slightest

[1] Cf. Chap. V. The type of foodstuff here makes a difference, e.g. among the Yakoë of Cross River, S. Nigeria, a man stacks his yams tied to poles in vertical rows and is able to assess his wealth quickly in terms of the number of his yam-sticks. Daryll Ford, 'Land and Labour in a Cross River Village, S. Nigeria', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. xc, no. 1, July 1937, p. 34.

Among the S. Bantu a man counts his cattle and thereby assesses his wealth, and in Melanesia he counts his heaps of yam and taro.

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622 651 643 the absence of tribal treasuries in all the Native territories of South Africa, levies have been make in cash for building schools, making roads, boring for water, &c. In the Bemba area the amount of money in circulation is very limited and the recent institution of tribal treasuries will make it possible for various social services to be provided from this source. There is also the historical fact that the chiefs of the Southern Bantu had formerly the right to 'eat up' the cattle of their subjects and hence it is but a small extension of this right to 'eat up' cash earnings. In the Bemba country, on the other hand, there was very little property in the possession of a commoner that his chief could seize.

Tribute Labour.

It only remains to discuss the third claim of the Bemba chief, viz. that all the labour of his people is his by right. All Bantu chiefs of whom we have any information have claims to the labour of their subjects. The tribe itself is in essence a chiefdom, a body of men who are loyal to one ruler. From the historical material we have available, it is clear that such units were built up first on a kinship basis. To the body of men who acknowledged kinship, real or fictitious, to one chief were added other elements, until the group grew to a large size. It was allegiance to the one chief which kept these people together through their long period of migrations and constant wars. The subjects of a chief were his men in a particular sense, even though the position of the freeman was distinguished from that of the slave in areas where subject peoples were incorporated as servants, or the institution of slavery existed.

The service a man owed his chief was either economic or military, that is to say, he might be employed in the cultivation of the royal gardens, clearing the roads, or building the chief's huts, or, in the old days, he might serve as a warrior. In some cases, the service a subject owed was specified and the army or labour force was organized. In other cases, the chief had a general right to call for assistance when in need. Thus, among the Nguni group of South Africa, and in particular among the Zulu and Swazi, the tribal organization on an age-grade basis was adapted to further military ambitions, and the subjects' service to their chief resembled a form of conscription, in which every young man of the tribe was drafted into a 'regiment' held in readiness to work for the king in

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his gardens, cattle kraals, village, or on the battle-field. Such an organized labour force still exists to-day in Swaziland in the *amabutho* or regiments of the Swazi chief.[1]

Among the Central Bantu, the chiefs had despotic powers over their subjects—in fact the right of life or death.[2] They had also general claims to the service of their people in whatever way it was needed. The Bemba king was the ruler of a military tribe as was the Zulu chief, but his army was evidently less highly organized than in the case of the Southern Bantu, and it was the village that provided the military contingent, not the age-grade. Over and above this, each chief was able to exact special dues of service to be used for agricultural purposes, known by the term *umulasa*. Our problem, therefore, is to discover the form in which these specific dues of tribute labour are exacted and how they affect the people's right to use the land. Is the service given in return for permission to cultivate, as the squatter on a European farm works so many months of the year in lieu of rent; or is the *umulasa* work given as part of a series of political dues by which a man's allegiance to his chief is expressed?

At present, the tribute service is a specified one and not a very extensive obligation. The exaggerated demands made by some of the South African chiefs on their subjects are not found in this area. The people rarely work more than two or three days a year and are very seldom called up more than once.

The amount of tribute labour demanded formerly is difficult to estimate. Here again survivors from the past delight to exaggerate the splendour of their rulers. They tell of the numbers of commoners who used to pour into the capital to serve the Citimukulu and they describe their work. It consisted for the men of tree-cutting, hut-building, hoeing, fencing, sowing, and in some cases of the traditional female occupations such as piling branches and reaping; while the women piled branches, reaped, carried in millet or ground-nuts from distant granaries, cleared paths or pulled up ground-nuts. These are still the tasks for which *umulasa* labour is used. The tribute service was and still is an act of recognition of

[1] H. Beamer, 'The Development of Military Organization in Swaziland', *Africa*, vol. x, 1937.

[2] If a family took summary revenge for a murder they had, according to Gouldsbury, to pay the chief a slave, as they had killed one of his people without permission. Cullen Gouldsbury, 'Notes on the Customary Law of the Awemba', *Journ. of the African Society*, vol. xiv, no. liii, 1914, p. 381.

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244 which a man can ask his friend for a handful from a new basket of nuts without possibility of refusal. This is known as *ukushiliko mutwe* (to take the taboo off the head). I cannot explain the custom.

241 *Other crops—Mound-cultivation.* Most other crops the Bemba plants on mounds (*mputa*) raised above the ground. These he makes either in the old burnt gardens, after three years use usually, or else in the beds round the village. The mounds are irregularly spaced all over a garden.[1] Of 10 measured *mputa* the average height when new was 2 feet, the diameter across the base 6½ feet. Those intended for cassava are usually built about 3 feet high because of the length of the root of the crop. When the Bemba use the word *ukulima* (to hoe) it is usually mound-making they mean. On mounds the Bemba plants roots such as cassava and sweet potatoes; legumes, i.e. beans, peas, cow-peas; cucurbits; and grains, i.e. maize and Kaffir corn. He thinks legumes and root crops are better suited to mound-cultivation because of their habit of growth. He says the trailing vines of the legumes spread over the surface of the *mputa*, and the cassava roots strike down into the newly dug soil. He explains, too, that *mputa* are raised out of the damp in the wet weather and that the roots of the plants are thus kept from rotting. But he also uses the method as a means of renewing the soil, and it does, in fact, expose a new surface of earth to the air. When the soil is old, he says, you must dig it up into *mputa*, and it is part of the regular cycle of cultivation in the old burnt gardens to dig up mounds in the third or fourth year.

Bemba make *mputa* of two types, from turf and from old soil. Round a new village they cut clods of turf with the hoe (*ukusapika*) and pile up the tussocks of grass in heaps. Earth is then flung on top to a depth of a few inches (*ukushikila*). This is heavy work and should be done by men. New *mputa* of this type are known as *mputa shya nsokwela* (mounds of the foundation, i.e. of a village). They may be made in the dry weather (May-September) and allowed to stand while the vegetation rots inside. The value of decaying vegetation is apparently recognized by some gardeners. One explained to me that richness (*umufundo*) was obtained in this way because 'things have rotted inside' (*ifintu fyabola mukati*).

[171] [1] Daryll Forde states that among the Yaköe, a Semi-Bantu people on the Cross River, S. Nigeria, these mounds are so evenly spaced by the natives by eye that he was able to estimate the size of a field by counting them. op. cit., p. 31. This is not so among the Bemba.

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(1) *The individual's hut.* The hut of each householder is in a sense a shrine, since the spirits of his own ancestors and those of his wife are supposed to linger there, especially at dusk or in the early morning. The *imipashi* are addressed there at the birth, marriage, illness, or death of a member of the family or at any other event that concerns the group. In some areas a special calabash is reserved for the spirits, and beer is placed as an offering there overnight,[1] but I did not find any specially sacred spot in the hut reserved for the *imipashi*, as Smith and Dale describe among the Ila,[2] and as is common among some of the Southern Bantu. Objects to be blessed are placed at the head of the owner's bed as will be described.

(2) *Village shrines.* The hut of the headman is the centre of the religious life of the village, but in addition small shrines of grass about three feet high (*nfuba*) are built to the spirits. I have seen these standing outside some headmen's huts, although this is rare nowadays, or else outside the village, usually among the garden beds. They are still quite commonly built in the latter position since their presence is more easily concealed than when they are built in the village. There may be one, two, or even up to twenty-five of these small spirit huts built, usually one to the headman's own ancestors, and the others to the dead chiefs of the district. The headman of the village is always the officiating priest at these shrines.

(3) *Dead chiefs' villages* (*ifibolya*). The sites of dead chiefs' villages are honoured as spirit centres (cf. Chap. XIII). Shrines are built on them after the chief's burial and, though these fall into decay, they are rebuilt on special occasions as long as memory lasts.[3] The sites of villages made by the first Bemba chiefs or chieftainesses are famous ritual centres with big shrines about six feet high built on them (e.g. the Shrine of Katongo Mukulu on the Lubu River or that of Bwalya Cabala near Citimukulu's village). Others are only known by the local people. All are rebuilt at the time of a big ceremony at the orders of the chief of the *icalo*, and the grass around them cleared on less important occasions (*ukukungula*). They are in the charge of local priests (*bashimapepo*),

[1] This practice is more common where Bisa influence is predominant.
[2] Smith and Dale, vol ii, p. 166.
[3] Compare the custom of the Bangweolu natives of planting a tree on the site of the dead chief's hut.

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769 796 178 rite was connected with one of the most sacred of the Paramount's *babenye*, a girdle made of the skin cut from the abdomen of a legendary figure, Mwase, said to have been killed for committing adultery with the Citimukulu's wife. It has now long since rotted away, but living men tell of occasions when the relic was taken from the *benye* house, bound round the waist of a young virgin, the maternal niece of Munuca, the greatest *mukabilo*. The girl then danced across the garden of the chief, scattering blessed sorghum seeds broadcast, while the Citimukulu and his *bakabilo* followed behind. This story, always told with great delight, seemed to me a sign that the sowing rites must have had greater importance formerly than at the present day.

769 796 241 Nowadays, the blessing of the seeds at a commoner's village is done in typical fashion by standing them in a calabash at the end of the headman's bed. In the morning, after the usual purification ceremony, they are sown in the headman's garden, all the villagers coming to help.[1] But I never saw such a rite performed myself, and I noticed that some natives were doubtful as to which seeds actually had to be blessed. For instance, of 10 informants, all gave pumpkins in their list, 8 Livingstone potatoes, 7 Kaffir corn, 6 maize, 5 *amankolobwe*. At the capitals, however, the sowing rites still persist. At Nkula's village in 1930 Kaffir-corn seeds in a huge gourd were stood overnight in the *benye* house and were sown next day on the chief's *mputa* by all the women of the village. The sowing ceremonies evidently used to give the people a sign when to start planting their crops, a matter on which skilled guidance is often needed, but it is doubtful whether they were ever occasions of big tribal gatherings of rejoicing as in the case of tree-cutting or harvest rites.

769 796 ● 171 182 (*d*) *First-fruit ceremonies.* Some form of first-fruits ceremony seems to be performed in all typical Bantu societies, and in these there are certain common elements recognizable. But the symbolism of these rites is often exceedingly complex, and varies widely from area to area. The ceremonies also tend to become the occasion of big tribal gatherings such as the army rites of the Zulu since they inevitably occur at the plentiful season of the

[1] One informant told me his father, a headman, always blessed the seeds of all the villagers and gave them each a handful to mix with their crops, but in most instances now it seems that the headman merely blesses and sows his own seeds. In Bisa districts, such as that near Shiwa Dandu, the original form of the rite seems to be more often adhered to.

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year. This combination of functions makes the question of interpretation even more difficult.

Some writers have described the ceremonies as being essentially a ritual which marks the change of the season and the beginning of new forms of social activity. Thus Bryant calls the Zulu rite *umkosi*, 'the stepping into the year', and Junod describes the complex *luma* ceremonies of the Thonga as typical *rites de passage*.[1] Of course, the harvest in any of these societies does actually mean a complete change in ordinary village life, but among the Bemba I heard no specific statement of this fact in any of the explanations of the ritual, nor is there any great ceremony of public rejoicing at the time except on occasions when a special harvest rite is carried out at the capital, or when the *ulupepo lukalamba* has been initiated. But the element of risk, thought to be associated with the beginning of the new food-supply, is prominent here as it is in other Bantu societies. The Thonga, according to Junod, consider that there is some magic danger attached to the eating of the new grain, and the name of the ceremony—*luma*—comes from *ukuluma*, 'to bite'. He suggests the taboo on the new food may be due, in part, to fear of quarrelling—which is an actual risk when beer starts to flow freely—or to a desire to avoid jealousy by preventing one man from beginning his new supplies before his neighbours are able to do so.[2] The doctoring of the chief against this danger of eating the new foods and the various rites designed to remove the taboo on the new harvest occur again and again throughout this southern area.

Among the Bemba I never heard a native state that there was any magic danger attached to eating the new food, and the name of the rite, *ukuposela* (to offer or place in front of some one), describes the essential element in their first-fruits—the recognition of the prerogatives of chief and ancestral spirits which will be described below. But it is evidently considered important that each crop should be ritually treated immediately the first specimen in any district ripens. There is no waiting till the end of the harvest for the ceremony. In fact it is reckoned so necessary to

[1] A. T. Bryant, *Zulu–English Dictionary*, 1905; H. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, 1929, vol. i, pp. 394–404.

[2] Cf. Junod, loc. cit., p. 394. *Report of the Commission on Native Law and Custom*, 1883, pp. 525–6 and 531–2. Cf. also M. Gluckmann, 'First-fruit Ceremonies of South-Eastern Bantu', *Africa*, vol. xi, no. 1, p. 34, for stress on the danger of quarrelling at harvest, and for other interesting interpretations of the Zulu ritual.

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'offer' each crop as soon as it becomes edible that three separate ceremonies are performed for the different new foods, rather than that either should be postponed till the time of the main harvest. Thus pumpkins, Livingstone potatoes, and maize, which are the first to ripen, are offered to the spirits together, then *mwangwe*, the quick-growing millet, then Kaffir corn, cow-peas, and *amankolobwe*.[1] Asked what would happen if a man began to eat his own new crops before the ceremony had begun, most natives merely said that it was bad to eat *cilyelye*, 'anyhow', i.e. without the right ceremony or etiquette, but two or three added that a man would be angry if he saw his neighbour eating new millet before he had any himself, and that this would be bad. The Bemba thus express a fear somewhat similar to that of the Thonga. But the ultimate dread is evidently that of angering the spirits and not fellow men, and older Bemba told me that failure to perform the ceremony means that the land is 'hard', lions catch the people, snakes bite them, and they fall off the trees, and that game becomes scarce—all evils believed to follow an injury to the spirits or a failure to give a living chief his due.

This brings us, I think, to another aspect of the ceremony which is prominent in most Bantu first-fruit rites, that is to say, the symbolic recognition of the prerogatives of the owners of the land, the chief and his dead ancestors. In some areas the chief is given special tribute at harvest, or beer is brewed for him when he travels the country. Alternatively his rights are proved by a ritual testing of the new food followed by his family, the tribal councillors, or the elders, all tasting in order of precedence.[2] Among the Nguni peoples the chief in his turn symbolizes his function as the giver by breaking a gourd and scattering the new food over the assembled peoples.[3]

Among the Bemba, this recognition of the rights of the living or dead chiefs at the time of harvest is the central act of the ceremony. In fact one man, asked why it was bad to eat the new food

[1] Has this series of ceremonies any similarity to the distinction made by Kidd between the little festival, when green crops are offered, and the great festival which follows it when grain is ritually treated, among the S. E. Bantu? Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, 1925, p. 269.

[2] e.g. in Bechuanaland. Willoughby, *Soul of the Bantu*, 1928, p. 229: among the Thonga, Junod, op. cit., vol. i, p. 394.

[3] Kidd, loc. cit.; T. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 1857, pp. 26–7, 392.

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without offering it to the dead, exclaimed: 'It is a crime. It is to steal';[1] and one of the 'Wives of the Relics' prayed at Mwamba's court: 'You Spirits, the people are eating your food gluttonously. They are eating your food without respect. We ask for mercy!...'[2] In the simplest cases, merely to show the new crop (*ukulanga*) to the headman is enough. This I saw done once when a handful of self-sown millet ripened early in the garden. It was not considered a real crop, but the woman who brought her basket to the headman said she did it 'just to show it because Lesa gave it to us. It was just a case of luck.'[3] In the case of the planted crops, however, the first head of grain to ripen or gourd that swells must be brought by its owner to the headman, and the latter blesses it in the usual way, places it at the end of his bed at night, and lastly carries it to the village *ulufuba* or spirit shrine, where it is given to the spirits. When the first new gourds are ripening it is common to see slices of pumpkin exposed in every tiny shrine when travelling from village to village. In the case of *mwangwe*, the headman's wife sometimes makes a dough (*umufuba*) of the new flour, and this is carried by a small boy to the *ulufuba*. All these are the rites known as *ukuposela*. At such ceremonies the priest apparently asks for nothing concrete. He merely, as he says, shows the food to the *imipashi* whose property it ultimately is, and tells them baldly that the food is now ripe. A prayer I heard was as follows: 'We have eaten the new food! May we go in peace! The new food is ripe now. We want to eat it now!'[4]

No tribute is given to the living chief at this time, although of course he gets more beer and grain at harvest time than any other. But the conception that tribute is due to the chief in virtue of his ownership of the land, seems to me to be reflected in the idea that ritual offerings must be made to the spirits at harvest time. The resemblance even extends to the belief that just as a man who gets an unusually good haul of fish or kills much game is bound to give a share to the chief, so when there is an unusually good harvest, it is necessary that a special offering should be made to the

[1] *Ni bupulumushi—Ni kuiba.*

[2] *Mwe shyamfumu! bantu balefunuka fyakulya fyenu. Nabalye fyakulya fyenu cilyelye. Twapapata!*

[3] *Kulangafye, ico Lesa atupela. Ni kushyukafye.* Self-sown Kaffir corn can be eaten without a ceremony among the Bamangwato. Willoughby, op. cit., p. 234.

[4] *Twalye 'cilyo cipya. Tuende no mutende? Fyakulya fipya mu calo. Tulefwaya tulye!*

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461 and therefore not a stimulus to exert their last ounce of energy to alter an intolerable state of affairs. Living at this particular economic level, other advantages sometimes seem preferable to a sufficiency of food. For instance, the immediate disadvantage of grinding and pounding to a tired woman may seem more obvious than the ultimate weakness she knows she will feel if she goes without her evening meal (cf. pp. 104–5). In fact, paradoxically enough, it would seem as if the 'fatal resignation' commonly noted among primitive peoples could only be cured by giving them regular food! It was certainly true that the few Bemba whom I saw displaying energy and initiative in the adoption of new methods of European gardening, planting of vegetables, &c., were natives who were better off, in constant employment, or somehow removed from the feeling of insecurity which was the habit of mind of their fellows. All these observations throw light on a fact which first strikes the European as puzzling, viz. the evident absorption of the Bemba in their food problems, which they discuss so constantly and with such interest, and yet their apparent insouciance in arranging to secure better supplies. Whether or not the Bemba are lazy through physical inertia, it is certainly true that habitual insecurity robs them of continuous energy in planning their needs.

461 181 The direct cultural drives towards food production are even more complex. We have here to deal with the dominant tribal interests, the activities with which prestige is most clearly associated, and the ambitions of each individual member of the tribe. This question is important. We want to know whether the Bemba were always indifferent agriculturists, or whether their present attitude is something specific—the result of economic changes at the present day. Now this group is always described as a typical warrior people, and though Bemba tribal structure is not based on military organization as is the case among the Nguni peoples of South Africa (Zulus or Swazis) and to some extent the Rhodesian neighbours of the Bemba, the Ngoni, yet it is true to say that the dominant ambition of their chiefs was apparently military conquest. To this end they strove to build up armies of followers, and collected guns and cloth and slaves. Their authority depended on military strength, as well as the people's belief in their supernatural powers. If they made big gardens, this was never their only method of getting food, and the cultivation largely served their

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Preface

I watched the ceremony described in this book in 1931 while I was doing a year's anthropological research among the Bemba, the dominant tribe in North-eastern Rhodesia. In 1933 I returned to the same area and continued my work until 1934; but though I collected a number of additional comments on the rites known in that country as chisungu (*cisungu*), I never had the good fortune to attend another ceremony of the same kind.

Nevertheless, I thought it important to publish an account of the single chisungu I was able to see because such ceremonies are rapidly dying out in Central Africa. I think it certain that the chisungu is performed much less frequently now than during my two visits; it may even be quite extinct. I have written in the present tense in this book because I have not been able to revisit Lubemba to see what changes have taken place there. When I use such phrases as 'in the old days' or 'formerly' I refer to customs which were no longer evident at the time of my visit. When I use the present tense I refer to practices current between the years 1930 and 1934 when I was still living in the country.

Heavy teaching duties and a world war have prevented me from publishing this material for over twenty years. The delay has been unfortunate except from one point of view: the book now appears shortly after one entitled *African Figurines* written by my friend Hans Cory, and published by the same firm. Mr. Cory's book describes the pottery figurines used in initiation ceremonies which resemble the chisungu in many parts of East, Central and South Africa. In Tanganyika, where he has worked for many years, these rites are disappearing as rapidly as they are in Northern Rhodesia. Mr. Cory has made great efforts to collect as many of the figurines as possible while they could still be acquired. His book indicates the wide distribution of these pottery symbols in Tanganyika and their use as one of the teaching methods of the initiation cere-

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monies. Figurines are also used in the Bemba chisungu; consequently Mr. Cory's fine set of photographs of the pottery models is a valuable introduction to the subject of this book. I am grateful for the opportunities he gave me to look at his collection at his house at Mwanza on Lake Victoria, and for many talks I have had with him on the subject.

Part of my account of Bemba marriage is derived from a paper published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and entitled *Bemba Marriage and Modern Economic Conditions*.[1] Since this paper is now out of print it is difficult for students to refer to it. With the consent of Dr. Clyde Mitchell, the Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, I have included some extracts from it in the text.

When I use terms in Cibemba, the language of the Bemba, I employ the current orthography in which the letter C is used for the hard C which is somewhat like 'ch' in English. Since English readers would be in doubt about the pronunciation of the word *cisungu* I have rendered this throughout as 'chisungu'. Following dictionary practice initial vowels of nouns have been omitted.

A generous grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation enabled me to write up this part of my field material. I am much indebted to the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College who gave me hospitality and provided the secretarial help which allowed me to complete the work.

I am, like every ethnographer, grateful for the patient help of tribal informants to whom I refer in the text. I also owe a great deal to Mr. E. Mundy, District Commissioner, Chinsali, during my stay, who gave me much practical assistance.

Professor Leonard Doob of Yale University was kind enough to read my first draft of the book, and Dr. David Schneider, then of the London School of Economics and now of Harvard University, made a number of stimulating suggestions. When the typescript was nearing completion my friend Mrs. E. M. Chilver gave me encouragement that I greatly valued and then took over the book and polished it and prepared it for the press, besides trying to teach me some English grammar. I am very grateful for her help.

[1] A. I. Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Modern Economic Conditions*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 4, 1940.

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Introduction

The chisungu of the Bemba is usually described either as a puberty rite for girls or as a female initiation ceremony. It consists of a long and rather elaborate succession of ritual acts which includes miming, singing, dancing and the handling of sacred emblems. In the old days the chisungu invariably preceded the marriage of a young girl, and was an integral part of the series of ceremonies by which a bridegroom was united to the family group of his bride, in a tribe in which descent is reckoned through the woman and not through the man, and in which a man comes to live with his wife's relatives at marriage rather than a woman with her husband's.

Ceremonies similar to the chisungu have been reported from other matrilineal areas of Central Africa. They exist, for instance amongst the tribes most akin to the Bemba, such as the Bisa, Lamba and the Kaonde, as well as amongst the Cewa and the Yao of Nyasaland. They have also been reported from the North-western Province of Northern Rhodesia in the country inhabited by the Ila, the Tonga and the Sala. They occur here and there in the Belgian Congo and Angola.[1] In spite of the wide distribution of these ceremonies however we have, as yet, no full description of any one of them, nor any detailed analysis of the function they appear to fulfil. It would be true to say that, in general, puberty ritual for girls has received rather scant attention in comparison with the very full treatment which has been accorded to the various initiation ceremonies practised for boys.

Puberty ritual sets complex problems for the anthropologist. It celebrates the attainment of sex maturity in the boy or the girl, and hence the physical possibility of parenthood. Naturally enough, it reflects tribal attitudes to sex, fertility, marriage and the rearing of children, and expresses, and tries to enforce, the

[1] See Appendix A.

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with her, is also a danger to all the men concerned. These triple relationships are constantly mentioned in court cases and are made the subject of claims by the injured family of a dead man or woman who declare that 'their child' has been killed in that way. They recur in narratives of the rather lurid sex lives of Bemba princesses who are expected to take many lovers, but must not bring trouble on the land by simultaneous relations of this kind.

Lastly, in common with many Bantu peoples, Bemba believe that, if a man commits adultery while his wife is pregnant, the baby is born dead. He has taken the spirit of the child (*asendo umupashi wa umwana*). If the woman is unfaithful while she is pregnant, then she herself dies in childbirth unless she confesses and gets medicine in time.[1]

I have dilated on this system of attitudes and beliefs because I think it fundamental to the understanding of Bemba puberty ritual and also because it cannot fail, I think, to strike the field-worker in this area as one of the basic elements of tribal dogma. It would be impossible to live long in a Bemba village without running constantly across instances of the effects of these beliefs whether in terms of ritual or in the most practical problems of cooking, catering and entertaining. If the Bemba can be said to have an ideological obsession in the sense that they are constantly pre-occupied with one set of fears, it is this belief in the magical potency of sex, fire and blood. Such emotional attitudes set us puzzling problems. In this chapter I shall confine myself to stating them. Later in the book I hope at least to suggest some hypotheses which may stimulate comparative research in other tribes holding similar beliefs.

To recapitulate, Bemba dogma stresses the role of the ancestors in determining human fortunes as well as the power of injured spirits, who revenge the injustices they suffered on earth on the

[1] It will be seen from the above that the causes of barrenness or death in childbirth are numerous among the Bemba. Barrenness may be due to the special curse of the father's sister; to an injured spirit returning to punish a descendant at random; to allowing the umbilical cord of a baby to fall to the ground; to adultery; or to witchcraft. Miscarriage is thought to be due to an injured spirit shaking the womb of the pregnant woman so that the baby falls out; when it occurs all the women of the matrilineage must be treated with medicine. Death in childbirth is due to the adultery of the mother herself.

The Cultural Setting

593 With this system of matrilineal descent the ties between a
604 woman and her brother are very close. The woman produces children who are the heirs of her brothers. The man is the natural guardian of his sisters' children, and he must be consulted about his uterine niece's marriage and could claim the right to marry her where he pleased. He could protect her after her marriage if he wished to do so. The mother's brother could generally claim possession of his sister's children if her marriage broke down. In
[567] the old days he could give one of the children as a slave or a blood-wite to the head of a family to whom he or one of the lineage group owed reparation. He could command the services of his sister's son and bid him follow him to war. The woman in her turn could com-
[789] mand the services of her brother's daughter and was thought to be able to bless or curse the fertility of the latter's marriage. Brother and sister can take each other's property and behave in a free and easy way with each other.

591 Marriage is uxorilocal among the Bemba and among kindred
● 171 tribes such as the Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Cewa, and Kaonde which
596 also perform a kind of chisungu ceremony. A young man who marries goes to live in his wife's village where he builds himself a hut and becomes a member of her extended family. This is a domestic and economic unit. The sons-in-law work together under
[606] the father-in-law and the daughters with their mother. The man gives service to his father-in-law rather than cattle or other goods as in most other Bantu societies. A young couple has no cooking fire of its own to begin with. The girl cooks with her mother and sends food to her husband at the man's shelter, where he sits with his friends. At first the couple have no granary of their own and no gardens and when they acquire the latter, later in their married life, the gardens are cleared near those of the rest of the extended family group.

596 As a family group of this kind grows in size, its head often
621 chooses to separate from the old village and to start a new one of his own. Hence the desire of a Bemba to have many daughters in order to be able 'to found a house'.

591 After the marriage has been established, and children have been born to the union, it remains a question for individual decision whether the husband is given permission to remove his

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The Ceremony

SEVENTH DAY

The first woodland ceremony

×881 *Taking them out to the bush* (*ukufumisha banacisungu mumpanga*). On the seventh day we were all summoned to the hut at about nine in the morning. The *banacisungu* were bundled in under rugs as before. Each was then hobbled by having one foot strapped with bark rope to her thigh, so she could only hop on the remaining leg, and had to be supported by an older woman.[1] Both girls looked embarrassed, and hid their faces as they came out to the public gaze.

[522] ('We are doing that just to tease the girls. That is what they did to us when we were initiated.' With evident relish, another added, 'We always do that to tease the girls.')

Outside the village, the girls' legs were untied but they still had to walk naked except for a cloth around the waist. They strode in front with heads hanging in acute shame. Behind them came a swarm of gesticulating women, running, shouting and scrambling. Two or three ran off into the bush to look for some of the emblems that would be needed for the rest of the ceremony—a special creeper used to tie up other emblems, and supple branches to be used to make mock bows. The young girls of the village followed behind carrying drums on their heads.

The gardening mimes

We stopped at a large *musuku* tree,[2] about an hour's walk away from the village. The base of the tree was quickly cleared of undergrowth with a hoe, and Nangoshye and her younger helpers began hopping round the trunk of the tree like frogs followed by the *banacisungu*. They sang 'O, you wild pig, come and hoe up the rough grass.' (Song No. 7.)

'Because the pigs root up the ground.' 'It is to train the girl to hoe.' 'It is to teach her to work hard now she is married.'[3]

● [171]

[1] Van Warmelo reports a similar 'hobbling' of girls in the *domba* ceremony of the Venda.

[2] The tree of fertility, as is the *mukolobondo* tree.

[3] *Subsequent interpretation* (P.B.M.). The women imitate the wild pig because the pig digs up food in difficult places. So the young wife must break up the ground to get food out of it.

N.G. It is to teach the girl to get up early to help her husband, as the pigs are out in the bush before it is light.

A.C. 'You have to look for food to feed those about you and bring children up in the way we have brought you up.'

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X 881 admiration of visitors. (See page 83.) Just as the Bemba headman
554 tries to attract people to come and live in his village and anxiously watches to see whether he is successful in building up a community, so the *nacimbusa* estimates her power by the number of women of eminence who attended throughout or who appeared on visits from time to time.

X 881 Present-day differences of income have added to the prestige
556 aspect of the ceremony. A man of substance wants his daughter's chisungu to be talked about. Like an English father who defends the cost of a 'white wedding' by saying 'I wanted to do my best for the girl', a Bemba father will say 'Well, I don't want people to say "That is not a man of wealth! There was little beer to dance the girl in his village." ' There seems even to have been some competition for the privilege of 'owning the chisungu'—between a father and a mother's brother, for instance. It will be remembered that besides the provision of food and beer, respect can also be expressed in Bemba society by songs and feasts.[1]

X 881 A really successful chisungu is difficult to carry out under
178 modern conditions since the absence of men and the smaller household groups result in smaller accumulations of food. No large sums of money are exchanged at the chisungu ceremony, so that chiefs and men in authority stand to gain little by a performance. I think these are the reasons why the chisungu has disappeared rather quickly. It is, moreover, organized entirely by women, and male dominance is emphasized in a modern wage-earning society.

X 881 The survival of ceremonial is apt to depend on secondary
● 171 motives of this sort in some parts of Africa, such as Sierra Leone and South Africa. In both contact with missionaries has taken place over a longer period, and the people are much more sophisticated. But, in the case of the Mende, for instance, the chiefs gain a large income from the holding of the *bundu* rite for girls; this is acknowledged to be one of the reasons why it has not only not died out, but it has even increased in influence.[2] The Kriges also point out that some initiation schools in the Northern Transvaal have

[1] A man might give his wife a second marriage ceremony in her old age (the *bwinga* marriage) for respect.

[2] Kenneth Little, 'The role of the secret society in cultural specialization', *American Anthropologist*, April 1949. The privilege of holding Yao initiation ceremonies is greatly valued. (See Appendix A.)

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spread among surrounding peoples for much the same reasons.[1] In such cases it might be said that the secondary motives for holding ceremonies have become stronger than the primary. Among the Bemba no such phenomenon seems to occur, and secondary motives which were originally powerful are now no longer operative.

DEDUCED ATTITUDES

Apart from the general functions of the chisungu in native eyes I have tried to deduce their attitude to different parts of the ceremony by noting the emphasis they give to them in straightforward narratives and the tension displayed by performers on different occasions and by analysing the time and energy spent. Such information does not, of course, exactly reflect the sentiments of the people concerned. Practical considerations and individual differences alter the emphasis in the case of a particular rite. One form of symbolic behaviour interests one mistress of the ceremonies, but does not attract some of her other colleagues. It would be necessary to use a questionnaire with a properly selected sample of individuals before saying confidently what 'the Bemba' think.

However, some of these clues are worth following up if only for the light they throw on the difficulties of studying ritual under field conditions.

Bemba descriptions of the chisungu given me before I had witnessed a ceremony, differ in a striking way from the account I have given. The omissions are so considerable that there is little correspondence between the sequence of events in the actual rite I witnessed and accounts given me in my first months of fieldwork, or even by *banacimbusa* after I had witnessed a ceremony.

Of course, the details of such rites are difficult for people to remember without recourse to a written record. It is not surprising that the most willing informants get confused and tend to confine themselves to events that are easily described or are thought likely to give the inquirer pleasure. Most of my informants were, moreover, women. Many Bemba men are experienced in classifying facts in a way convenient to the European, either because they have been to European schools or worked as

[1] J. D. and E. J. Krige, personal communication.

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months before puberty and forms of partial intercourse are practised before she is fully grown. Yet, in spite of this, intercourse is thought to be dangerous. Moreover, it is the act within the marriage bond that is feared, not the act outside it.

The taboos surrounding marriage may be accounted for superficially in terms of Bemba belief, as I have already tried to show. Since it is through marriage that a man is able to get into touch with his ancestral spirits, the relationship is, for that reason, considered dangerous; dangerous because it is a source of power. Taboos of the Bemba type may exist in other tribes where access to ancestral spirits can only be made after an act of intercourse in legal wedlock followed by purification. Data on this point are not available from other areas at present.

It is difficult to believe that the Bemba associate guilt with sex in marriage, even though they speak of married couples as being hot, or with 'bad things on their bodies', if they have not been purified in the approved way. It is at least possible that sex is only considered shameful in association with a man's ancestors who are, in this society, his maternal uncles and grandfather. In daily life a Bemba behaves with reticence and shyness before his mother's brother since he may one day inherit the latter's wife together with his name, his status and his bow.[1] There may thus be an extension to the spirit world of attitudes to living relatives, which would explain the resolute attempt to keep a 'hot' person away from the spirit shrines.

The taboos may also reflect the anxieties associated with marriage in Bemba society, for it is, after all, a frail link on which to depend for an approach to supernatural power. Margaret Read has pointed out that among the Nyasaland Ngoni, who are patrilineal with strong patrilineages, and who practise marriage by bride-wealth, girls are protected before marriage and the ceremony involves a test of virginity. After marriage there are few, if any, taboos on handling fire. Among the neighbouring Cewa who are,

[1] It is possible that the castration complex takes a different form in matrilineal societies in which a young man succeeds to the role of his maternal uncle and not his father. The reluctance to associate sex with an approach to the ancestors may be connected with it. Malinowski made suggestions along these lines in 1927 in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* but little serious comparative work has been done on these lines since then, so far as I know.

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like the Bemba, matrilineal with weak matrilineages, and who have divided authority over the family and marriage by service and token transfer, there is little emphasis on premarital chastity. Marriage involves a test of the virility of the bridegroom, not of the virginity of his bride. After marriage however, the taboos surrounding the sex act are put in motion and the anxiety they engender remains constant throughout married life. The Ngoni bridegroom is certain of his rights in his wife once the cattle have been found for the bride-wealth. His lineage acquires permanent control over her reproductive functions; if he dies, he will be replaced by another lineage member. The Cewa man, on the other hand, contracts a marriage more easily and more at his own inclination; he gives his own labour for his bride, not the cattle of his patrilineage. But he never acquires full power over his children or full, let alone permanent, control over his wife.[1]

Gluckman suggests that there is a correlation between strong patrilineages and stable marriage.[2] There may also be an association between the strength of the lineage, the presence or absence of bridewealth, and anxieties expressed as taboos surrounding sex in marriage. Further work on this subject will have to be done before we can speak with certainty or even probability.

However strong the fears of the Bemba are, the way of escape from them is easy. The correct observance of ritual rules and reliance on the elders—the elders who preside over the chisungu and other ceremonies, and the chiefs who bless and curse—is sufficient. Bemba society is surely a 'shame' rather than a 'guilt' society, to use Ruth Benedict's terms.[3]

It is curious that the Bemba, whose marriages are trial marriages in their early stages, should express such a strong belief in the mystic links uniting husband and wife in the chisungu ceremony. Bemba men or women can leave their partners fairly easily, for there are no complicated marriage payments to be returned as there would be among the patrilineal Bantu. Yet the Bemba are

[1] Cf. M. Read, 'The moral code of the Ngoni and their former military state', *Africa*, vol. XI, 1938.

[2] M. Gluckman, 'Kinship and marriage among the Lozi of Northern Rhodesia and the Zulu of Natal', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 1950.

[3] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 1946.

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much more comparative information is needed before adequate ones can be given.

Another apparent paradox is the contrast between the position of the bridegroom in daily life, and the role in which he is depicted in the chisungu. In village affairs he must be submissive and quiet, as befits a stranger. He works under the orders of his in-laws and only gradually wins his position as head of his own family. In the chisungu he appears as a roaring lion, a lion-killer, a crocodile, a hunter, a warrior and a chief. The bridegroom in a matrilineal society of the Bemba type is honoured as a *genitor*, not as a *pater*. The bride belongs to her own matrilineage and the bridegroom is allowed access to her to make her fertile. He is welcomed in the village as a procreator, and honoured as such.[1] The bride's family is indebted to the bridegroom for 'the gift of a child'. In the chisungu rite it is the bridegroom's sister who 'begs for parenthood'. The virility of the bridegroom is emphasized throughout the rite, and the marriage ceremony which follows is a test of his procreative powers; he must give a sign of his potency by throwing a burning brand out of the house on his marriage night. The chastity of the girl is not praised either in the chisungu or the marriage ceremonies. It is sociologically irrelevant in societies of this type.

We might expect to find some kind of association between this kind of matrilineal organization and ritual stresses on fertility, such as tests of the virility of the man or a ritual marking of the first conception. I think evidence for it exists. Among the Fort Jameson Cewa the virility of the man is tested by a fire-lighting ordeal in the bush. If the fire lights, the man is known to be potent. The Nyanja give ritual stress to the conception of the first, sometimes the second, child of a union. The Yao sacralize puberty. Yao puberty rites lead to a marriage ceremony, and marriage ceremonies are followed by a celebration of the birth of the first child of the union. An obsolete Yao rite apparently honoured the virility of the man after his wife had been found to be pregnant. It seems possible that the Bemba ceremony of 'taking the child' is a

[1] Yao informants told Clyde Mitchell that a son-in-law was just like a rooster who comes into the yard to fertilize the hens but never owns them. Bemba fathers have more extensive powers than Yao fathers but they are depicted in the same light in proverbs and folk-tales.

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similar solemnization of the fertility of a union. (See Appendix A.)

If a Bemba husband fails to give his wife a child, his marriage comes to an end. If he makes her pregnant, but she dies in childbirth, he will be held responsible by the heads of her matrilineage and by her father and mother. He is said to have 'killed' their child.[1] On the other hand, if he succeeds in the hazardous enterprise of Bemba marriage, he 'founds a house' and acquires not only status but rights of approach to his own matrilineal ancestors.

The honouring of the son-in-law in the chisungu also enacts the desire of the womenfolk to attract a young man to make his home in their village. There may be more in the chisungu mimes than this. It is at least possible that the women had an unconscious sense of guilt about robbing fathers of their children, children who are so much wanted and which only men can give. Bemba girls are brought up in a male-dominated society and are taught to kneel to men and to put them first. Their fathers are respected autocrats in the home, but are dethroned as their children grow up and realize that ultimate power lies with their mothers' brothers. The women court men to give them children, but they do not allow them the full rights of a sociological father or *pater*. They deny him ultimate power over his children; perhaps they compensate him by giving him exaggerated respect in the chisungu as the procreating male.[2]

Sex hostility is not apparent in the chisungu. There are songs which can be interpreted as mocking at men but I did not hear them sung, and they do not seem to be an integral part of the ceremony. The women certainly stress their complete command over matters concerning childbirth. The mother of the girl, her father's sister, and the mother of the boy unite in this respect: this sex grouping cuts across those based on lines of descent. The secrecy of the chisungu may be women's compensation for their seclusion from other aspects of tribal life. But there is nothing to

[1] When a Princess was safely delivered of a child in the old days, the friends of her lover did the dance for a lion-killer returned from the hunt and shouted 'He is saved! He is saved!'

[2] D. Schneider reminds me that according to psycho-analytical theory the penis of the man is equated with his child. He suggests that the Bemba father is robbed of his child but compensated by the symbolic representation of his virility in the chisungu.

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match the ritual hostility between the sexes shown in some other initiation or marriage rites.[1]

Traces of hostility are revealed in the man's attitude to the chisungu. At least one Bemba man told me that unless the rites were performed 'our wives will hate us and give us no respect'. I have also heard remarks from women which seem to show that they are anxious lest they alienate the husbands attracted to the matrilineage. For instance, girls are instructed not to cry out in childbirth 'because it is a thing of shame. These are the secret things of women. Because the man will hear and will say "It is I who gave her that belly. I am ashamed because other women don't cry out like that".'

To conclude, Bemba evidence supports the suggestion that there is a connection between matriliny and girls' initiation ceremonies which emphasize the importance of fertility. In any society in which it is believed that women provide all the physical substance from which the foetus is formed, this would be natural; it is the case in Bemba society. Moreover, the connection between matriliny and girls' initiation ceremonies has been observed in a number of other African communities.[2]

I have suggested that there are also other possible associations, between matriliny characterized by absence of marriage payment, for instance, and instability of marriage with anxieties and taboos centring round the beginning of married life. A further association is suggested between matriliny combined with uxorilocal marriage, and initial inferiority of the young husband combined with compensating honours given him in the rituals of marriage or initiation. I have also suggested, very tentatively indeed, that in this particular matrilineal society there may be a connection between the lack of open hostility between the sexes and an unconscious feeling of guilt at robbing the man of his children, which is expressed in fears on the part of the women that the men will leave them, and on the part of the men that their wives will not respect them unless taught to do so by the chisungu.

[1] Cf. M. Gluckman, 'The role of the sexes in the Wiko circumcision ceremonies', in *Social Structure* edited by M. Fortes, 1949, and P. Mayer, 'Privileged obstruction of marriage rites among the Gusii', in a paper read to the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1950.

[2] See Appendix A for a further discussion on this point.

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the exclusion of the functions the rite performs for the individual, the role aspirant, as I have called her here.

Another device which is prominent in the chisungu is of course the mechanism of the sacred emblem and its associated formula. This ritual pattern is also very common in ceremonies intended for the passing on of roles or of systems of values. In the chisungu a series of related ideas are associated with certain symbols, the pottery figurines, and with fixed forms of words, the doggerel rhymes that are sung. This is a very interesting mechanism and one that is of very wide use in Bantu Africa as Cory and others have shown.[1] First it is evident that the designs and the pottery emblems form a sort of *aide-mémoire*. Women started to hum the songs when they saw the *mbusa*, as I observed myself when watching the making of the pottery figurines. Mrs. Culwick was told specifically by a Bena woman that the models were useful to make women remember the songs.

It became clear to me also in the course of Bemba village life that the figurines not only act as mnemonics for the songs but that they also come to represent moral attitudes and obligations and to represent them in a quotable form. I have heard a line of such a rhyme shouted by a girl's mother to an idle bride as a form of rebuke. On an occasion when a young married woman was tempted to go off to a beer-drink and leave her baby unguarded in the hut behind, an older woman suddenly shouted to her the song associated with the house *mbusa* (cf. Appendix B, No. 51). This song calls to mind the moral tale of the mother who leaves her baby alone in the house so that it falls into the fire and gets burnt. The girl in question looked irritated and impatient, and then shrugged her shoulders, gave up her project and went inside her house. In such circumstances the chisungu rhymes enable the Bemba to give formal expression to public morality. In other words the seemingly meaningless doggerel becomes a weapon. Bemba women recognize this as is shown from the comment made on the crocodile model. 'The girl will remember "that is what they taught me by the crocodile".'

[1] Cf. H. Cory, 'Figurines used in the initiation ceremonies of the Nguu of Tanganyika', *Africa*, vol. XIV, 1943–4. Such figurines also occur among the Bena. Cf. A. T. and G. C. Culwick, *Ubena of the Rivers*, 1944.

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APPENDIX A

The Distribution of Chisungu Ceremonies in Central Africa[1]

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It is impossible to map the distribution of girls' initiation ceremonies in Central Africa completely, since there are so many areas for which we have no information. Nevertheless they seem to be widely practised. A number of tribes in Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, the Congo and Angola hold puberty rites for girls which are called by the same term as that used by the Bemba—chisungu. Other tribes hold ceremonies which seem to be very similar in that they are individual rites organized on a family basis and related to the institution of marriage, and that they consist of the seclusion of the candidates, mimes, singing and dancing, and they exclude any physical mutilation such as clitoridectomy, which is practised among some of the Eastern and Southern Bantu. These ceremonies are however called by different names. In yet a third group of peoples, mainly Nyasaland, and Tanganyika, girls' initiation schools are held, either instead of individual ceremonies, or concurrently with them. In some tribes these schools occur side by side with circumcision schools for boys, and in the case of the Yao, a final ceremony is held jointly for boys and girls.

The group of tribes which practise chisungu rites is a large one. It can be divided as follows:

Northern Rhodesian peoples

(*a*) In North-Eastern Rhodesia among the Bisa-Lala-Lamba tribes which are culturally and linguistically akin to the Bemba;[2] the Kaonde of North-Western Rhodesia and Kazembe's Lunda

[1] I am indebted to Mary Douglas (Tew), W. H. Whitely and Violaine Junod for collecting much of the material used in this note. Numbered references are given to the bibliography.

[2] No. 64.

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who are also closely related;[1] and among the Bemba living in the Belgian Congo.[2]

(*b*) Among the Nsenga on the left bank of the Luanga river, originally an offshoot of the Lala, Drourega mentions a rite by this name in a work which appeared in 1927;[3] it also exists among the neighbouring Ambo of the Petauke district.[4]

(*c*) The Alungu, a tribe of Tanganyika origin living to the north of the Bemba, practise the chisungu.[5]

(*d*) The Ila, living on the Kafue river in North-Western Rhodesia, have a girls' initiation rite called chisungu, but actually not very similar to the Bemba rite, which was described by Smith and Dale in 1920.[6]

Congo Peoples

In the Belgian Congo, chisungu ceremonies are mentioned by Devers among the Lunda in the South Katanga area,[7] while Lambo describes such ceremonies among the Congo group of Lala.[8] Marchal speaks of a *kisungu* rite among the Shila on the western bank of the Luapula.[9]

Portuguese Angola peoples

The evidence from Angola is somewhat confused. Milheiros writing of the Lunda and Luena of the Kaianda region, uses the term *Nkanga* for girls' puberty rites,[10] while White speaks of *Kanga* ceremonies among the Luchazi, who lie across the Northern-Rhodesia-Angola border, and among the Chokwe. Van Buggenhout however uses chisungu for girls' puberty rites throughout the area, that is to say those of the Lunda, Chokwe and Luena of Angola.[11]

All these tribes are of Congo origin and mostly of Lunda stock. The Bemba say they are an off-shoot of the Luba, and Coxhead believes that the ancestors of the Bisa, the Bemba and Kazembe's Lunda arrived in North-east Rhodesia in the middle of the eighteenth century. Verhulpen and others consider that these tribes all broke off from the Lunda kingdom established between the Bushmaie and Lubilishi rivers during its period of expansion in

[1] No. 42, No. 53, p. 68.
[2] No. 14, No. 59.
[3] No. 19.
[4] No. 64, p. 63.
[5] No. 8, p. 39.
[6] No. 54.
[7] No. 16.
[8] No. 37.
[9] No. 39.
[10] No. 43.
[11] No. 4.

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the seventeenth century, and this seems the most likely explanation.[1] The Kaonde also claim Luba origin. The Lunda and related peoples of the south-west Katanga area in the Congo are described as descendants of seventeenth-century emigrants from the North Lunda area before it became Luba-ised, while those in North-Western Rhodesia, now described as Lovale, are composed of Lunda and Luena, who settled in the fifteenth century, and Chokwe, Luchazi and Mbunde who emigrated from Angola 50 years ago.[2] According to McCulloch's summary, Lunda offshoots also entered Northern Angola and the Western part of the Belgian Congo in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, where they settled as conquerors among the local Bantu inhabitants and became the ancestors of the present Luena, Luchazi and Chokwe.[3]

It is probable that chisungu ceremonies are much more widely distributed among these Lunda or Lunda-derived tribes in Angola, the Congo and Northern Rhodesia, than our present information indicates.

All these tribes are agricultural rather than pastoral. They all follow matrilineal descent and succession. Some practise temporary and some permanent uxorilocal marriage, and some virilocal marriage or mixed type unions. Marriage payments tend to be low; instead, the husband serves his father-in-law according to the Bemba pattern. Where marriage payments rise, as in the Angola group, there is a tendency towards virilocal residence.[4] Ancestor worship is pronounced, and this cult is associated with chieftainship, although kingdoms with 'divine' kings and centralized governments of the Bemba type are not now common in this group. The information does not tell us whether blood-sex-fire taboos are strong.

Among the Bisa, Lamba, Lala and Kaonde peoples, the group most akin to the Bemba, marriage is initially matrilocal with marriage by service and token payments. Chieftainship is associated

[1] See M. McCulloch, No. 40, pp. 9–13 and A. I. Richards, No. 48, Chap. I for discussions on these points.

[2] No. 40, p. 89 analyses the evidence for the Angola area.

[3] No. 40, p. 57.

[4] Vide A. I. Richards, No. 51 for a discussion on the degree of variation in marriage practices which are inevitable in matrilineal and matrilocal societies.

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with ancestor worship. The Bisa have a number of chiefs, as have the Lala, and it seems that the recognition of a Paramount Chief of the Lamba was a post-European phenomenon. The Mwinilunga Lunda have a paramount chief of acknowledged authority in the Kazembe, but the Kaonde were divided into small autonomous chiefdoms.[1]

Apart from the Lamba, the chisungu ceremony in these tribes seems to be less closely associated with marriage than among the Bemba. Among the Lala of the Congo there is little insistence that the rites should precede marriage, and sometimes they take place two or three years after it.[2] The Kaonde celebrate the rite two or three years before puberty. Melland regards this chisungu as a puberty rite advanced before the girl's first period for fear she should become pregnant before her chisungu has been danced.[3] There is no specific mention of the use of pottery figurines in the ceremony, nor of virility tests.

The Lamba ceremonies are more fully described than the others in this group. Salient elements in the rites are the bringing of the girl to the base of an *umwenje* tree followed by a long period of seclusion during which the girl must be covered with blankets when she emerges for any purpose from the initiation hut.[4]

The initiation ceremonies of Bemba peoples in the Congo territory lying roughly between L. Tanganyika and L. Mweru seem to resemble those of the Bemba in North-eastern Rhodesia in outline. Verbeke speaks of a preliminary *kukobeka* or engagement rite followed by the chisungu, or '*shisungu*', when dolls of both sexes and various vases are shown to the young couple and there is a final ordeal of arrow throwing carried out by the bridegroom'.[5] Delhaize describes a somewhat similar ceremony with an interesting rite called *kulasila kisungu*, which he translates as 'to chase the hymen', when the bridegroom pretends to shoot the girl with a bow and arrow. The marriage rite called *buina* which follows, in the case of the first two wives of a man, involves giving an arrow by the father to the bride—a common symbolic act throughout this area.[6]

To the east, the Nsenga, an offshoot of the Lala, on the left

[1] No. 64, pp. 56, 62, 68. [2] No. 37, p. 255. [3] No. 42, pp. 76–80.
[4] No. 18, Chap. IX. [5] No. 59, pp. 57–59. [6] No. 14, pp. 173–227.

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bank of the Luangwa river, formerly held an individual chisungu rite for a girl at the end of a three or four month period of seclusion following her first period. There were three parts to this ceremony —a dance held by 'medicine women', and a dance by the candidate herself on designs traced on the ground in low relief, with the last of these on a crocodile design. The girl was then given presents. Lastly there was a night-long dance by naked men and women to which the term chisungu was given.[1] Parts of this ceremony, and in particular the mention of designs in low relief and the symbol of the crocodile, seem to be similar to the Bemba chisungu, but the data are not full enough for further comparison to be made. The Ambo chisungu described by Stefaniszyn makes special mention of the importance of the taboos of 'fire and salt' at this time.[2]

The Lungu to the north of the Bemba are a matrilineal people who came to their present home from Tanganyika, but may have come originally from the Congo. They apparently practise uxorilocal marriage. Their chisungu ceremony has features which resemble those of the Bemba. The bridegroom has to put a spear through the roof of his bride's mother's hut. Then his supporters face the hut with bows and arrows while the girl's parents and relatives stand outside the hut door. They take the arrows and it is explained that these are to kill adulterers. The rite concludes with a test of the virility of the man, who shouts out 'I have eaten the chisungu of my bride' if the marriage has been consummated.[3]

The southern Lunda and Ndembo of the Congo reckon descent matrilineally, and marriage is initially uxorilocal. Here again the son-in-law makes slight marriage payments, but gives service for his bride.[4] Among the Angola Lunda descent was matrilineal but marriage payments were made and marriage has become virilocal. Ancestor worship is practised in both the Congo and Angola. Chiefs exist, but the people are mainly divided into small chiefdoms and princedoms. Large kingdoms like that of the Bemba and the Kazembe's Lunda are not reported. Beliefs as to blood, fire and sex are not described.

In the chisungu described by Devers in the district of Mutshatoha, on the railway west of Jadotville, the girl is made to lie on

[1] No. 19. [2] No. 64, p. 58. [3] No. 8, pp. 39–41. [4] Nos. 16 and 17.

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the ground in front of a *mbudi* tree, and then secluded in the bush. On her return she is daubed with red ochre and oil and stands in the centre of the village while the people dance round her during the day and following night.[1] The ceremony resembles closely that described by Buggenhout and Wens for the Lunda of Angola, a rite which he believes to be of wide distribution. Here again, the essential act of the chisungu is the bringing of the marriageable girl to the foot of the *mbudi* tree. Her mother lays her naked between two blankets with her face to the tree, and then calls the men and women of the village and sometimes of neighbouring villages. Dancing goes on till nightfall when the men retire. The girl is taken to a special hut for seclusion for two or three months, and the women dance round the hut each night until there is a final feast and dance. The relation of these South Lunda ceremonies to their marriage institutions is not clear, but these chisungu are evidently nubility rites since the girl is either betrothed before the ceremony, or her husband is chosen immediately after it. There is no mention of pottery figurines or of virility tests.

From the sketchy data we have, the common features of the ceremonies among the Bemba, Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Kaonde, Alungu, Nsenga, Ambo and the Southern Lunda are the individual nature of the puberty rite, the seclusion of the girl, the mimes and the dancing. Some common symbolism exists among the Bemba, Bisa, Lamba, Lala and Kaonde and the Alungu. The ceremony at the foot of the *mbudi* tree in the Congo and the Angola chisungu rites, and the *Umwenje* tree among the Lamba, and the designs in low relief of the crocodile among the Nsenga, also seem to be common features. Nowhere are the ceremonies so complex as among the Bemba unless we are to assume that the data we have are very inadequate indeed.

The Ila, who were also listed above as practising a chisungu, belong to a different ethnic group. Their origin is obscure and they have been frequently raided by Lunda, Luba, Lozi and Kaonde and split up by internal fighting. They have a curious descent system, since succession is patrilineal, but a man belongs to his mother's clan. Marriage is contracted with the payment of a high bride-wealth in cattle, and residence is patrilocal. Ancestor

[1] Nos. 16 and 17.

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worship is highly developed. There are numerous chiefs, and a centralized government was never achieved.

Here there are boys' circumcision schools and similar schools for girls in the Nanzela district. The chisungu rite consists of the seclusion of the girl for two or three months after her first period, in a special hut, round which the women dance each evening. The whole ceremony is called the *kuzaluka* while the term chisungu is reserved for the great feast and dance which takes place at the end of the rite, when cattle are distributed among family and clan relatives. If the girl is not betrothed before the chisungu her husband will then be chosen for her.[1]

The *Ngoma* ceremonies of the plateau Tonga who are neighbours of the Ila, are very similar to the chisungu of the latter tribe, although differently named. The Tonga are matrilineal with no fixed rule of residence at marriage, although Dr. Colson's figures showed a slightly higher rate of virilocal residence.[2] Ancestor worship is practised but there is no institution of chieftainship.

The details of the puberty ceremony of the two tribes are rather similar although the social organization differs so markedly. In both areas the girl is urged to sit in the dark during her seclusion and to play on musical instruments. Her body is rubbed with red clay. The girl is covered with blankets whenever she leaves the hut. Among the Tonga this period of seclusion is known as *kuvundika*, the term used for the covering of tobacco with leaves to make it ferment. After this come the ceremony of emergence from the hut, the ritual bathing of the girl and a feast of chickens, goats and cattle. Women mimic the birth of the girl and do a dance which represents the cattle killed for the occasion.[3] The neighbouring Sala appear to have similar rites.[4]

Among the peoples who practise individual puberty rites for girls, but who do not use the term chisungu, the most important are the matrilineal tribes of Nyasaland and its border districts in Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia. The tribal admixture in Nyasaland is a complex one owing to the constant movements of people that have taken place there. There were two major migra-

[1] No. 54, Vol. II, pp. 28–34.
[2] E. Colson, unpublished MSS.
[3] No. 7, p. 49.
[4] No. 3.

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tions. One from the south consisted of Zulu off-shoots who crossed the Zambesi river in 1835, and proceeded north as the conquering 'Ngoni' to settle in a number of separate districts to the west and east of Lake Nyasa: one from the Mozambique area consisted of Yao, Makua, Lomwe and Makonde. The Yao entered Masasi and the neighbouring districts in Tanganyika in the 1850's and later moved north into Nyasaland where there are now four Yao settlements, and also to the east of the Lake in Tanganyika. The Makua-Lomwe and Makonde now inhabit the district south of Lake Nyasa.

Besides these major movements of peoples, years of slave-raiding scattered the less war-like tribes then living in Nyasaland and brought Arab influence into the country. Some of the Yao, who themselves became slave-raiders, adopted Islamism and so did some of the Cewa.

From the point of view of this note therefore we have to deal with matrilineal peoples of different origins, the Congo group and those of the Portuguese East African coast. Some of them became Moslems and some did not.[1] The presence of conquering patrilineal Ngoni has altered the matrilineal emphasis in some areas. The first group of matrilineal peoples to settle was the Cewa, Nyanja and Nsenga, who resemble the Bemba-Bisa-Lala-Lamba group in culture, but have a tradition of having arrived much earlier from Lubaland. These are described by Tew as the Maravi group (i) and they now inhabit the region south-west of the Lake and extend into the Luwanga province of Northern Rhodesia.

The second matrilineal group is formed by the Tumbuka-Kamanga peoples of the north-eastern shore of Lake Nyasa, and the Winamwanga and the Wiwa. Little is known of this complex of tribes, but Tew concludes that their 'ethnic sub-stratum consisted of people closely related to their Maravi neighbours to the south'.[2]

The third matrilineal group is formed by the Mozambique tribes already referred to, that is to say the Yao, the Makua-Lomwe and the Makonde.

[1] No. 59. See Introduction from which I have taken this classification of the Lake Nyasa region peoples.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. ix.

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All these matrilineal tribes are agricultural, although some of the Yao now keep cattle. Succession is matrilineal and residence commonly uxorilocal. Marriage payments vary but are, or were, of the Bemba token-payment kind, in most areas. The political units are of the petty chiefdom type. Yao and Maravi chiefs had ritual powers and made approach to ancestral spirits, but kings with centralized government of the Bemba or Mwinilunga Lunda type do not occur. There are suggestions that fire taboos exist among the Yao, and the Maravi, with special taboos on eating salt.

The characteristic features of girls' puberty ceremonies, as distinct from those of the Bemba, is the presence of double or triple rites with a strong emphasis on the ritual of pregnancy as well as on that of puberty. Boys' ceremonies occur and are elaborate among the Yao, Makua and Makonde. Circumcision is practised in boys' initiation schools and is said by Livingstone to have been introduced to the Yao by Arabs.[1] The right to hold ceremonies is highly prized in this group and is usually the prerogative of chiefs. Among the Maravi people a masked dancing corporation, the *Vinyau*, takes an important part in the initiation ceremonies of boys and girls.

Among the Maravi peoples, the Cewa carried out initiation rites for girls which bear some resemblance to those of the Bemba. Girls were usually married very young here, and generally before they reached puberty. Hodgson's account of the ceremonies of the Cewa of the Dowa district of Nyasaland, written in 1933, is probably the fullest.[2] He speaks of a simple puberty rite which takes place at the girl's first period, followed by the full ceremony which was postponed till after the second month and always coincided with the slack season after harvest. The girl, or girls, are dragged out of the initiation hut by the female instructors to the sound of a musical instrument imitating the voice of the jackal (*fisi*). Throughout the ceremony the *vinyau* dancers in masks representing various animals such as the hare, elephant, antelope or vulture, and costumes of wicker and grass, perform after each meal and sometimes tease and beat the girl. On the first day she is taken into the bush, taught secret songs, made to climb a tree and stripped naked and then carried to the village with

[1] Quoted by M. Tew. No. 58, p. 19. [2] No. 29, pp. 131–6.

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flour on her head on an older woman's back. On the second day the girl is covered with flour and chased through the bush being reminded of her past sins. On the third day the masked animal dancers predominate; the girl is reclothed and presented to her relatives and four men dance dressed as women with bananas as false breasts. On the fifth day the girl gets a new name, and husband and wife are presented in humility to the rest of the community.

The Cewa girl was supposed to be deflowered by a man other than her husband at the end of her first period and this man was styled the *fisi* or jackal. If the girl reached the time of her main *cinamwali* without being married then a second *fisi* had to be chosen to sleep with her after the rite, and he might not afterwards become her husband. Cullen Young suggests that there was a test of the virginity of the girl before the final dance in the great *cinamwali*,[1] although this would be unusual in the case of these matrilineal peoples. A third ceremony, a pregnancy rite, was evidently held after the girl had been pregnant for three or four months.

J. M. Winterbottom, in an account of girls' puberty rites among the Cewa of the South-western area of the Fort Jameson District of Northern Rhodesia, speaks of the whole *cinamwali* beginning with 'the little initiation' at puberty, and continuing till 'the great initiation' when the girl has become pregnant, as being all one rite. The first ceremony at puberty proper initiates the salt and fire taboos which are important in Cewa belief. The main ceremony, which is a nubility rite, involves dancing on pictures in low relief in a small circle of mud. A crocodile and a snake are the most important of these designs and the comparison between these and the pottery floor designs of the Bemba is evidently close. A virility test is important here also. If the bridegroom fails to light fire by twirling the firestick in its notched groove once, then he is considered to be impotent. The girl is also asked on the morning after her marriage night if her husband has proved virile, and he is mocked by the villagers if he has not. Another man is then called 'to eat the *cinamwali*'. A pregnancy rite takes place here as among the other groups of Cewa cited.[2]

[1] No. 11. [2] No. 63.

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The matrilineal Nyanja seem also to have a series of rites for girls similar to those of the Cewa, and ending in the celebration of the birth of a first, or sometimes a second child. The main ceremony is a nubility rite in which pictures are drawn on the ground with ashes or flour set in a small circle of mud, and on these the women dance. Werner describes the men dancing in grotesque masks of wood and cloth at these rites, and uses the term *zinyau*, presumably the same as *vinyau*, for these dancers. She speaks of a procession round the village by women carrying 'certain mysteries' among the lake-side Nyanja. These details bring to mind much of the Bemba chisungu ceremonial and the mysteries may well be pottery figurines.[2]

The Tumbuka-Kamanga group, which also includes the Henga and the lake-shore Tonga, are matrilineal, with marriage by service instead of by payments, and uxorilocal residence. Only by heavy payments could the bridegroom win the right of taking his bride home to live with him in his own village.[3] In areas where the people have become patrilineal owing to Ngoni influence this position is changed. Chiefs and centralized government are again absent from this area. Petty chiefs are responsible for acts of ancestor worship.

Among the Tumbuka puberty rites for boys were simple and individual; the youth was given medicine and 'some tests of manhood'.[4] The girl was usually betrothed before puberty and when this event occurred she was 'housed' or secluded for a week to three months. After this period there was a dance, teasing and punishment of the girl for her former peccadilloes, an examination for virginity and finally a washing rite and, in some districts, a covering of the girl with ashes or flour to show she has become clean.[5] As among other tribes in this group it was dangerous for the girl to become pregnant before the final dance known as the *usamba*. Wiwa and Winamwanga rites are somewhat similar.[6]

[1] M. G. Marwick, personal communication, 1947.
[2] No. 61, pp.127–8.
[3] No. 38, p. 58.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[5] No. 11; No. 20, p. 151.
[6] No. 3, p. 38.

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For the tribes of Mozambique origin we have the fullest material on the different Yao groups. These are matrilineal people with a strong avunculate. Residence is mainly uxorilocal and the 'ideal' group consists of a man and his married sisters, with their husbands and children. Ancestor worship was formerly practised but many Yao are now Moslems. The political units were petty chiefdoms in which the rulers had at least some ritual functions.

Both boys' and girls' initiation schools existed and were elaborate. The annual initiation ceremonies (*unyago*) are among the Yao of Lindidisi are described by Heckel as 'the most important part of the culture of the Yaos.'[1]

The term *unyago* is used, according to Stannus, for the boys' ceremony, *lupanda*, the girls' *ciputu*, and the *litiwo* rite at the first conception of the girl. There follows a naming ceremony for the new child. Thus the rites conform to the serial pattern characteristic of this group. The links between the male and female rites seem however to have been unusually close and the final acts of both took place jointly at the *lupanda* lodge of the boys.[2]

Boys' initiation schools could only be held under the order of a chief or important headman and the right to hold such a ceremony was jealously disputed. Girls' schools could be organized by heads of villages.[3]

The boys' *lupanda* is a rite of circumcision. It is held very early in the boys' life, that is to say at 7 to 8 years. The symbolism resembles that of the Bemba chisungu in that pottery representations of animals are drawn in low relief on the ground and mimes of agricultural activities take place as well as of hunting, crafts, and other activities. The zebra, hyena, sable, elephant and other animals are also mimed.[4] Stannus, writing about the Machinga Yao, mentions seventeen animal images and the figures of a drunken woman and a woman dead in childbirth. Such models sound very much like those used among the Bemba.[5]

The girls' *ciputu* took place before puberty and parallels closely that of the boys. Clitoridectomy used to be practised among

[1] No. 28, p. 19. [2] No. 55, p. 296.
[3] No. 58, p. 19. She quotes here from H. L. Duff, *Nyasaland under the Foreign Office*, 1903, p. 312. Mair says that the right to hold girls' ceremonies among the Dedza Yao was inherited from the original holder, who received the power from a chief. (No. 38.) [4] No. 47. [5] No. 56.

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Moslems but was discontinued in 1903.[1] The *ciputu* consists of a month's seclusion in the girls' dormitory, with singing and dancing. Interesting elements were an attack on the village by women dressed as men followed by a mock trial and the release of prisoners. Animals made of wicker were manipulated by the men to frighten the girls. Mimes of the girls' work in agriculture, cooking and housebuilding were frequent. At the end of the ceremony a roof was carried over the heads of a group of girls as a symbol of their position as the pillars of the house (cf. the Bemba song given on p. 199).[2] Ritual defloration of the girls took place in the old days. The final ceremony of the girls was held jointly with the boys at the *lupanda* lodge.[3]

A pregnancy rite, the *litiwo*, was held when the young bride first quickened with child. In singing, dancing and feasting the virility of the man was honoured: Heckel, writing of the Yao of Lindidisi, talks of 'an initiation of first birth' when the husband is praised highly in song and hymns. A naming ceremony for the baby took place when it was six months old in this area.[4]

Stannus mentions ceremonies now extinct, called *kulukwi*, and says that these were held in the case of wives who had not conceived since their *ciputu* rite.[5] Their husbands were put through various tests of manhood including the splitting of a notched stick with an axe. Mitchell working among the Yao in 1949 did not see this rite.

Weule, writing in 1909, says the initiation ceremonies of the Makua were more elaborate than those of the Yao.[6] For the Makonde, their southern neighbours, we have a full description by Lyndon Harries.[7] The girls' rites have some parallels with those of the Bemba. The candidates, who are usually ten to fourteen years old, sit in a row in front of the *ciputu* house with a bow, which is afterwards carried in a dance procession round the village and is said to represent vaginal distension. Games on the subsequent day include teasing the girls and the representation of male activities. The hunting of a gazelle means the man's hunt for a partner and a woman is afterwards trapped in a hunting net. On

[1] No. 55, p. 296.
[2] No. 61, p. 126.
[3] No. 56, p. 234; No. 38.
[4] No. 23, pp. 24–26.
[5] No. 56.
[6] No. 58, p. 26.
[7] No. 27, pp. 24–6.

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the second night the vaginal extension practised by so many of the tribes in this area, including the Bemba, is initiated ceremonially. Later the mothers of the girls get new fire from a brand taken from the *ciputu* fire, and carried round the village. A month's semi-seclusion follows in which the secret of the songs is revealed in return for the fees paid to the instructress. On emerging from the hut there are more mimes in which a man hunting for game with a bow is again depicted. Later a log of a tree which represents a phallus is brought into the house. There are a number of further symbols including instruction on the care with which the father's property must be handled as distinct from the mother's.

Further research will probably show that rites of the chisungu type are much more widely distributed in Central Africa than appears from these scattered references. I would also expect to find far more common features in the ceremonies than have been referred to here, if more direct observations had been available, for it will be recalled that the accounts of the Bemba chisungu given from hearsay evidence differed considerably from my own observations of the rite and were limited to outline descriptions of one or two of the more dramatic incidents.

From the material presented here it is only possible to pick out certain common features in the chisungu, or chisungu-like ceremonies mentioned. First, the emphasis in all these ceremonies is on the magical danger associated with the girls' first period, and on the first act of intercourse after this event. Ritual defloration, or rather intercourse with a man other than the husband on the first occasion after puberty, took place among the Cewa, and formerly among the Yao, while among the Bemba it was limited to the case of the wife of a chief. The information is not full enough to enable us to tell whether the taboos surrounding sex, blood and fire are as pronounced among the other tribes mentioned as they are in the case of the Bemba. The material Margaret Read gives us on the Cewa suggests that this may be so in their case, as do the references to menstrual and fire taboos among the Yao and other Mozambique tribes. The taboos are specifically mentioned by Doke in the case of the Lamba.

The ceremonies are everywhere considered to be a preface to marriage and there is a general fear of the birth of a child to a girl

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who has not received the magic protection given her by the chisungu rite. For this reason the ceremony tends to be advanced earlier and earlier in some tribes and takes place some years before puberty among the Kaonde, the Yao, Cewa and Makonde. For this reason, too, there is a wide incidence of double rites of protection for the girl, one designed to save her from the immediate dangers of menstruation and the other to make possible safe marriage.

There is a universal stress on the importance of fertility in marriage, and this is marked not only by nubility ritual but also by pregnancy rites of different kinds. The Cewa have a simple puberty rite followed by a ceremony performed after a month or two, as well as the *vinyau* dance, which is, to all appearances, closely associated with fertility. The Nyanja perform a second rite after the first or second child of a union has been conceived, while the Yao sacralize puberty leading to marriage, and follow this with a rite that takes place when the first child of a union is born. It seems possible that the Bemba rite of 'taking the child' is a celebration of a fertile union of this sort.

The virility of the man is also both tested and honoured ritually. The Bemba chisungu ceremony emphasizes it, and the succeeding marriage rites are tests of the virility of the man, not of the chastity of the woman. The Yao rite of celebrating the virility of the man after the girl is pregnant is another case in point. Among the Fort Jameson Cewa the virility of the man is tested by a fire-lighting ordeal in the bush. If the fire lights the man is known to be potent. The Alungu rite had similar features. I have discussed elsewhere my reasons for suggesting that virility tests of this kind are more common in matrilineal societies than patrilineal.

The ritual mechanisms seem to show at least some similarities throughout the Northern Rhodesian and Nyasaland group. The use of a special initiation hut for the singing and dancing is common, although it is not stated whether designs are painted on the walls of the hut as in the Bemba chisungu. The presentation of pottery emblems is not commonly mentioned, although it is reported among the Nsenga where the women dance on pottery models of crocodiles and other designs made on the ground. The Nyanja make similar models. Among the Cewa animal representations are made by the *vinyau* society; agricultural mimes are

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performed in the case of Yao boys' and girls' rites, and miming is generally common in the ceremonies.

One similarity of form noted in these abbreviated accounts is in the rites in which the girls are brought to the base of a named forest tree; this occurs among the Bemba, the Lamba, the Lunda of Angola and those of Jadotville. A log of a tree is brought into the hut among the Makonde, and another special feature is the search for pots of beer which occurs among the Bemba and the Nyanja.

The ceremony of shooting an arrow at a mark which takes place on the last night of the Bemba chisungu, and the giving of an arrow to the bridegroom at the Bemba wedding is paralleled among the Alungu, and in the Tumbuka-Kamanga country where an arrow is shot at a tree. Makonde ceremonies also use the bow as an important symbol. The bow appears to represent the stretching of the vagina in some cases; the bow and arrow are also used to represent the hunting or searching for the bride; the possession of the arrow seems to symbolize the husband's possession of the bride.

Since most of the tribes recorded are of Lunda origin, it is not surprising that there are similarities in the symbols used in the rites.

It is not possible to answer all the questions I asked as to the possible connections between chisungu rites on the one hand and matrilineal structure, marriage by service and uxorilocal residence on the other; nor those between chisungu as practised by the Bemba and the existence of ritual chiefs who can approach the ancestral spirits only after intercourse in marriage and ritual purification. The evidence on which to test these hypotheses is simply not available.

Suffice it to say that the correlation between girls' individual puberty rites and matrilineal organization is very marked in Central Africa, and that both the glorification of the role of the nubile girl and the praise of the man from another clan who gives her fertility, are consonant with the beliefs on which matrilineal organization rests in this area.[1] Boys' ceremonies exist side by side

[1] The only patrilineal tribe which I remember in this area which has individual puberty rites for girls and none for boys is the Nyakusa. Cf. G. H. Wilson, No. 65, p. 238.

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Appendix A

881 with girls' among the peoples of Mozambique origin as they do on
171 the coast from which the Yao, Makua and Makonde come, but the
611 girls' rites are not mere replicas of the boys' but are definitely a series of nubility ceremonies starting with puberty and ending with the celebration of pregnancy and childbirth. The coincidence between matriliny and agricultural activities which was postulated by some of the earlier evolutionary writers, such as Bachofen and Schmidt, exists here in actual fact.

This correlation has probably little bearing on the chisungu, except that in this area the introduction of stock has usually been followed by the giving of cattle as a marriage payment for the bride and hence the bridegroom's acquisition of rights over his children, and his achievement of the equally important right of virilocal residence. Where the high marriage payments are made, as in Angola or in parts of Nyasaland, the Bemba matrilineal, uxorilocal marriage by service pattern, which I have tried to associate with girls' fertility ceremonies, tends to disappear.

881 I cannot test the validity of the correlation I tried to suggest
171 between the importance of the Bemba chisungu and an ancestral
769 cult mainly carried out by chiefs. The evidence is not full enough
642 on this point. Nevertheless it is worth pointing out that the Bemba are the only people in this group with ritual kingship and a centralized government developed into key institutions of the whole tribal structure, and the Bemba ceremonies are more complex than those of any of the other tribes mentioned. The rites among Kazembe's Lunda may be found to be as complex, but on the present evidence, the Bemba are the only other tribe in the group which has, or had, a 'divine' king, chiefs with ritual powers, matrilineal descent and uxorilocal marriage. From the evidence at present available the ceremonies that come next in order of complexity are those of the Yao. Here there is no 'divine king' or centralized organization, but the strength of the matrilineage and the emphasis on matrilineal descent as a basis of residence seems to be stronger than in the other tribes in the area, judging from Mitchell's evidence. The other questions I have asked throughout this book must await their answers when the field evidence is fuller.

Dr. Gluckman pointed out to me that what has been taking place in the Bemba chiefly structure is a feature not only of Bemba history but also of many other African systems. This is a tendency to dichotomy and political struggle for the big posts between the various branches of the clan. The junior branches tend to drift and separate from the main branch and then they have to fight to get back to gain the main chieftainships. The struggles are related to the territorial divisions and the fights and intrigues between the powerful heads of such areas have, in practice, the effect of periodically re-uniting the nation. For, after each civil war, the big posts leading to the Paramountcy are again in a single branch of the family. The Paramount himself takes over the Lubemba area and the tribe is united again until a new drift away of junior branches to become territorial powers recommences. This is not the place for anthropological theorising so I refer these characteristics to the genealogical table[1]. We now have three branches of the clan. The second branch, that of the Mukukamfumu has steadily moved farther away from the Chandamukulu line, but it has succeeded in taking one big chieftainship the Nkula, and perhaps a second, the Chikwanda. Hence the tendency, mentioned by Dr. Richards, for certain chieftainships to become stabilised in definite families, is partially true. (*Op. cit.* (1), page 103.) Unless the junior branch fights, as the Mukukamfumu one is doing, it would eventually move still farther away from the senior branch and find itself left with just its present chieftainships and no hope of getting to the Paramountcy. Any third branch of the clan, as the present Mushimba branch, would also find itself drifting still farther into a little separate line of succession. This has happened to third lines in the earlier and present lineage. (See Section 3.)

In the past this drifting away of a junior branch has often been stopped by wars and fights in which the junior branch brought itself into the Paramountcy line again. The Chimbola incident is one I have described. But these wars cannot occur in the future and the Bemba chiefly system is at a delicate stage. The old councillor who said that this would have been a fighting period was right. The Mukukamfumu branch has been satisfied, more or less, with the Nkula chieftainship since 1924 and the Chandamukulu branch still to-day says it is willing for the Mukukamfumu branch to follow on after it even to the Paramountcy. There is not much hope of this as I show later. The fact that there are two queen mothers with hereditary names is still a guiding line to succession and I am inclined to think that no son of a Chandamukulu or a Mukukamfumu would be considered as being " too far away " to come into the direct line—at the moment. The Chandamukulu succession must keep switching back to the extreme left, but, if the Chandamukulu has many sisters, daughters, and nieces, as in the present lines D and E, the Mukukamfumu must be pushed farther away to the right. And so her sons will be farther away from the Paramountcy. In time even a descendant of a Mukukamfumu would be " too far away."

That explanation is of future complications and most of us can see the difficulties in allowing the line to go on indefinitely to the right. To deal with present day succession. Is one stop at least to be made after Chikwanda D15, the last son of a Mukukamfumu ?

I will continue to refer to Mushimba C11 as the third sister because, as I have explained, her name has now been made into an hereditary one and I have classed, for convenience and because C4's family is at a dead end, the offspring of the two Chandamukulus C4 and C5 as one family.

[1] [See CA1 116, pp. 44-50 — Analyst]

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THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE BEMBA TRIBE—NORTH-EASTERN RHODESIA

By AUDREY I. RICHARDS

I. Bantu Political Organization—Some General Features

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THE political systems of most of the Bantu peoples known to us show certain striking similarities, particularly as far as South and Central Africa are concerned. We are apparently dealing in each case with a tribal organization that is an outgrowth of a smaller lineage group, either split off from a parent stem in search of independence and new territory, or scattered by the onslaught of an enemy. In South, Central, and to a lesser extent East Africa most of the ethnic groups now known as tribes have a surprisingly short history of occupation of their present habitat —rarely more than 200 years and sometimes as little as 50 to 100. For this reason the original kinship structure of the immigrant people can still be recognized as the framework of their political system. Authority is almost invariably based on descent, whether within the family, the village, the district, or the nation, and the chief of the tribe combines executive, ritual, and judicial functions according to the pattern of leadership in each constituent kinship unit. Like the family head, he is a priest of an ancestral cult, believed in many cases to have a mystic power over the land, and he invariably claims rights over his people's labour and produce. The hierarchy of Bantu society allows only one type of authority, one basis of power, and one set of attributes in its leaders in most of the tribes so far described.

Besides this personal relationship established by tradition between the Bantu subject and his chief, yet another feature of the political organization depends on facts of kinship, emotional, legal, and ritual. Political power and prerogatives tend to become concentrated in the hands of descendants of the original lineage group, of which the chief is the living representative, and in many areas tribal cohesion seems very largely to depend on the predominance of this ruling line, whether the latter is to be reckoned as the first Bantu people to occupy the particular territory, or whether it conquered the earlier inhabitants and subsequently

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642 built up a new state. We find tribes called after the name of the original leader of the nuclear community[1] (e.g. the Zulu, or the 171 lineage groups of North Basutoland loosely described as Bamoheng, or Bamoketela): and others called after his clan (e.g. Kwena, Mangwato). The descendants of the first chief's clan may form a ruling caste (e.g. Zulu, Swazi, Bemba), and the total number of clans in the tribe may be arranged in order of precedence based on the tradition of the original migration into the area, or else the degree of relationship with the descent group of the chief.[2] The next of kin of the chief may play a definite part in the political organization, may claim rights to territorial chieftainships or villages, membership of tribal councils or smaller advisory bodies (e.g. the council formed by the chief's brother, sister, and near relatives among the Venda), or they may act as a regency council at the chief's death (e.g. Venda, Tswana, Swazi).

642 These then seem to be common features of Bantu political
171 organization—the position of the chief as head of a community
121 held together by bonds, real or fictitious, of kinship and as priest of an ancestral cult, and a political structure based on the dominance of a leading family line or clan. It is the differences in the machinery of government and in the incidence of tribal authority within this common pattern that make the interest of a comparative work like the present. In examining a particular case, there are a number of different conditioning factors which seem to account for these variations in political structure. Of these the most obvious appear to be the following: (*a*) the length of time the tribe has inhabited its present territory; (*b*) the type of immigration, whether by peaceful penetration, ejection of other units or their amalgamation;[3] (*c*) the emphasis placed on different prin-

[1] Schapera uses this term to describe a ruling group which has conquered and finally amalgamated other peoples often of foreign stock (cf. p. 57).

[2] cf. the heirarchy of Ganda clans: the precedence observed in tasting first-fruits in order of clan seniority among the Sotho peoples, and the respect still accorded to the Zulu and Swazi clans that have split off from the original royal stock, when it became necessary to contract marriages between members of one house.

[3] Compare the differences in size and homogeneity between single tribes largely of one stock with a single paramount chief (Swazi, Bemba); the congeries of small autonomous tribelets with similar cultural features but no supreme head (the swamp peoples of north-eastern Rhodesia or the low-veld tribes of northern Transvaal); or the amalgamation of a number of different ethnic groups into one empire by conquest or absorption (the old Luba Empire of the Congo, or that of the Zulu under Shaka or the Basotho under Moshesh).

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ciples of social grouping such as descent, age, sex differences, or local ties by which the tribe may be integrated and the incidence of authority determined; (*d*) the economic bases of the people's activities which affect their degree of dispersal, the form of leadership required, and the economic values associated with political prerogatives; (*e*) the type of foreign rule to which the tribe is subject and the European elements that are effecting its political development, i.e. variations in policy from the administrative system known as Indirect Rule in Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, to the more direct government by the white man in South Africa or the attempts made to create new political institutions for Natives, such as the Bunga system of the Transkei.

All these factors will be found to account for differences in political organization among a number of the kindred peoples known as the Bantu, and I shall try to analyse the Bemba system along these lines.

II. The Bemba Tribe

(*a*) *Tribal Composition.* The Bemba tribe at present inhabits the Tanganyika plateau of north-eastern Rhodesia, between the four great lakes—Tanganyika to the north-east, Nyassa to the east, and Mweru and Bangweolu to the north-west and west respectively. They number to-day about 140,000, very sparsely scattered over the country at a density of an average 3·75 per square mile.

The Bemba trace their origin to the area now known as the Belgian Congo and declare that they were originally an offshoot from the great Luba people which inhabits the Kasai district. The fact that the first ancestor of the Bemba is known as Citi Muluba ('Citi the Luban') substantiates this tradition, together with the cultural similarities still noted between the two peoples and the fact that Luban words, no longer understood by the Bemba commoner, are still used as part of the religious ritual at the paramount chief's court. The legends of immigration are numerous and circumstantial. The first arrivals apparently crossed the Lualaba River, which forms the western boundary of their present territory, about the middle of the eighteenth century, and travelled north and east until they established their first headquarters near Kasama, the present administrative centre of the Bemba country. From the sociological point of view, their history

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616 **222** Opposite clans performing reciprocal ritual duties and standing in a joking
171 relationship to each other have been reported among several of the Central Bantu tribes,[1] but the distribution of this type of clan organization in Central and East Africa is as yet unknown, and the whole phenomenon has never been fully described to my knowledge. I am therefore publishing the following notes on the *Banungwe*,[2] or opposite clans of the Bemba of N.E. Rhodesia in the hope of eliciting further comparative information on the subject.

614 The Bemba are divided into forty or more exogamous matrilineal clans (*mukoa*) tracing descent through the mother to some original ancestor or ancestress, a more or less legendary figure dating from the time of the first occupation of the present territory of the Bemba two

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[1] *Cf. Awalongo* of the Lamba. C. Doke, *The Lambas of N. Rhodesia*, 1931, p. 197, and the *Banungwe* of the Bakaonde. F. H. Melland, *In Witch-bound Africa*, 1923, pp. 251–53.

[2] E. B. H. Goodall, late Provincial Commissioner of the Ndola area, wrote a short descriptive note on the *Banungwe* in *Some Wemba Words*, 1921, p. 75, and I would like here to pay tribute to the value of the ethnological material contained in this small vocabulary. It must be only a fraction of the author's very wide knowledge of Bemba customs, of which his recent sudden death deprived us. *Cf.* also my reference to the *Banungwe* in 'Preliminary Notes on the Babemba of N.E. Rhodesia,' *Bantu Studies*, September, 1935.

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614 praise-names are very similar to those shouted in honour of a chief on formal occasions or used
186 as titles of address to him, and these phrases,
195 preserved exactly in traditional form, and often expressed in archaic language, appear to be characteristic of Bantu chieftainship and clan system. Malinowski has shown in a typical Melanesian society how the myths of a clan origin, 'owned' and recounted by its members, form a recognized charter for the exercise of legal privileges such as rights of occupation of land or ritual prerogatives, and it is quite
[173] probable that among Bantu, where myths, in the sense of tales of the miraculous doings of clan heroes are rare, yet the recitation of the names of clan or chiefly ancestors, the repetition of stories of their lives, or the shouting of a key sentence or proverb from such tales may fulfil very similar sociological functions.

614 It is the name of the Bemba *mukoa* and the story of its acquisition by a special lineage group
[616] that provides the basis for the pairing of opposite clans, or *banungwe*. The clan names are those of a variety of objects, animal, plants, meteorological phenomena such as rain, parts of the human body, and even cultural activities such as funeral lamentations. The most common are
[192] the following:—crocodile (*ngandu** or *ngwena*—the royal clan), fish (*sabi*, or in the Bisa country *tembo*), lion (*nkalamo*), leopard (*ngo**), otter (*mbao*), rat (*mpuku*), frog (*luo*), bees (*kashimu*), elephant (*nsofu*), wild pig (*ngulube* or *Cabala** or *nama*), tortoise (*Nkamba*), goat (*mbushi*), dog (*mbwa*), honey-bird (*nguni*): millet (*besa**), porridge (*bwali*), mushroom (3 clans—*boa*, the ordinary word for mushroom, *mwansa*, a special type of mushroom, and *ngona*, the Bisa mushroom clan), grass (*kani*, diminutive of *cani*), gourd (*lunda*), castor-oil seed (*mono*), wild loquat (*mumba** or *Cilufya*), tree or drum clan (*ngoma* or *muti* in Bisa country), beans (*nkanda**): iron (*mbulo*), rain (*mfula*), anthill (*culu*), male genitals (*membe*), female genitals (*nkashi*), lamentations (*nkonde** or *misoa*), pot (*inongo*). It is interesting to note
614 that some of the names are words no longer in
171 common use, *i.e.*, those marked with an asterisk, and that the majority of these titles are found widely spread among those Rhodesian tribes which claim an origin from the Luba-speaking peoples in the Congo, such as the Kaonde, Bisa, Ushi, Unga, etc. This is especially true of the

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614 [171] oldest clan names (*bwali*, *ngandu*, *sabi*, *ngulube*, *boa*, *ngoma*, *mumba*, etc.)[5]

Some of these *mukoa* names are accounted for by a story describing the original splitting off of a lineage group to form a new clan. For instance, natives say that the ancestors of the lamentations clan (*nkonde*) were once members of the wild loquat clan (*mumba*) who had settled far away from the parent village. One of their members died but the rest of the *Bena mumba* refused to come and wail at the funeral. Hence a split took place between the two groups, and the younger branch declared, 'We must wail for 'ourselves now. Truly we are a clan of mourners.' Other stories are so uncomplimentary that they are narrated only by members of other clans, *e.g.*, that of the mushroom clan (*Ngoma*), the royal clan of the Bisa, said by some to describe the splitting off of the Bemba proper from the Bisa during the original migration into the country. In this instance the ancestress of the present mushroom clan refused food to a hungry child of the royal or crocodile clan of the Bemba, declaring the pot she carried on her head was empty. But she stumbled and fell and the pot rolled off her head and was shown to be full of mushrooms. Hence, so the Bemba Paramount chief declares, 'We said; You clear off now and 'leave us alone. You have refused our child food. 'We call you the mushroom people now.'

Other *mukoa* names are actually those of the original ancestor of the clan itself, usually used as an alternative title, *e.g.*, Cilufya, an ancestor of the wild loquat clan, and a name less commonly used for it. In some cases I could get no story of the origin of the clan names.

614 616 The *banungwe* of each clan are those whose object 'by its nature is hostile to or dependent 'on or complementary to one's own.'[6] For instance, the crocodile and fish clans are *banungwe* to each other since crocodiles live on fish; the

[5] The *Mukoka* or matrilineal clans of the Lamba include 15 of the same clan names. *Cf. vide* Doke, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

I have not used the word 'totem' for these clan-name objects since the use of the *mukoa* name is not associated with any special cult of the animal or plant, with a taboo on its use, legends of descent from the object, or identification of the clan members with the species of animal or plant, or indeed any of the features considered characteristic of totemism as described in such classical areas as Australia, or N. America.

[6] E. B. H. Goodall, *loc. cit.* Some identical pairs are recorded by Doke among the Lamba, *op. cit.* p. 197.

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614 fashion, if the two are *banungwe*, but I never heard this done. A man can also tease his
616 *munungwe's* wife and pretend to make indecent proposals to her. Lastly, *banungwe* may call down curses on each other with impunity
[789] (*kulapishya*, a very serious curse believed to be fatal as among ordinary people). This is done nowadays jokingly at the time of the new moon. Time after time I have heard the crescent moon greeted by shouting children tearing round the village calling the names of their *banungwe*, saying, 'Moon! Come and eat the people of 'such and such a clan!'[10] *Banungwe* are said to be able to take each other's possessions without let or hindrance in joke at the time of the new moon. If a man seizes an axe from the hut of a member of an opposite clan, the owner has to redeem it with 1*s*. or some small coin. Men pretend to raid the huts of their female *banungwe*, and particularly to snatch any objects, clothes, or cooking pots, that may be set to dry on the roofs.[11]

[582] There seems also to be evidence that the *banungwe* relationship was originally associated with reciprocal marriage rights. An intelligent old chief told me, '*Banungwe* used to marry each 'other in the old days. It was specially good to 'do so. It was like the marriage of cross-'cousins.' Another elderly informant explained, 'The *Banungwe* are our wives because we knew 'each other a long while ago and because there 'is no in-law avoidance (*mako*) between us. We 'used to exchange each other in the old days.[12] 'That is why there is no *mako*. All those 'women (*i.e.*, the *banungwe*) are our wives.' The younger native does not give a retrospective explanation of this sort but merely laughs and says he can shout at his mother-in-law if he has married a *munungwe*. It does not matter what

[789] [10] The Bemba usually curse by Leza, the High God, or by the ancestral spirits of dead chiefs. I only heard cursing by the moon on such occasions.

[171] [11] The available data shows us that the Bakaonde also tease members of their opposite clan (*e.g.*, birds and kaffir corn clans, etc.) whom they call *Bunungwe*, which Melland translates as 'tease or victim.' He mentions small gifts such as beads, honey, or beer given by the chaffed man to the joker. Melland, *op. cit.*, p. 252. The Lamba clans are paired in opposites known as *awalongo*, some pairs resembling the complementary clans of the Bemba, and Doke states that the opposition between two clans is to-day confined to jesting, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[12] For exchange he used the reciprocal form of *Kusalushya*—to exchange, *i.e.*, *Kusalushyana*—this word being used for marketing or bartering goods.

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9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

A MODERN MOVEMENT OF WITCH-FINDERS

AUDREY I. RICHARDS

ALL over present-day Africa witch-finders seem to appear, as it were from nowhere, flourish for a time, and then disappear. Either it is some individual of unusual personality in his community who announces a magic remedy for human sufferings, and so obtains a following, or else it is a more or less organized band of wonder-workers which crosses the border from some neighbouring territory with all the kudos attached to the foreign and the strange. Among these latter the celebrated *Bamucapi*, who recently swept from Nyasaland into Northern Rhodesia and later reached Southern Rhodesia and the Congo, are an interesting example. The actual origin of this movement is difficult to discover, but I watched it at its height in the Bemba country of N.E. Rhodesia in the summer of 1934, and I want in this article to describe very shortly the methods of these witch-finders, and to try to account for their success.[1]

The *Bamucapi* themselves were for the most part young and dressed in European clothing. They went about the country in ones and twos, usually paying local assistants to help them. Their leader, they said, was one Kamwende of Mlanje in Nyasaland, but he was spoken of as a person of mythical attributes rather than as an organizer in actual control. The procedure of the witch-finders was impressive. Arrived at a village, they summoned the headman, who was bidden to gather his people together and to kill and cook a chicken for the ritual meal of which all were to partake. Once assembled the men and women were lined up in separate files, and passed one by one behind the back of the witch-finder, who caught their reflections in a small round mirror by a turn of his wrist. By his image in the glass it was claimed that a sorcerer could be immediately detected, and thus discovered, he was immediately called upon to yield up his horns (*nsengo*), a term which included all harmful magic charms. Wonderful stories were told of the perspicacity of the witch-finders. Horns wilfully concealed were

[1] During this time Professor Malinowski, then on a tour of inspection of his pupils' fields of study, visited my area, worked himself on this problem, and generously allowed me to add his notes to my own.

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The success of the movement was from the first *overwhelming*. It completely captured the people's imagination, and created its myths as it spread. From hut to hut of an evening men shouted the latest exploits of the witch-finders—the number of horns found in such and such a village, or the people miraculously saved from snakes or lions. The Government, which at first allowed the movement to proceed unchecked, was universally praised. 'This is the best thing the Bwanas have ever done for us,' many natives told me. 'Now at last they are allowing us to free our country from witchcraft.' Adverse criticism of missions which refused to allow their Christians to drink the medicine was frequent. The suspicion, and often the accusations of witchcraft commonly made against unpopular Christian teachers, seemed at last to be publicly substantiated. 'If they have nothing to fear,' the natives said, 'why are they afraid to put themselves to the test?' At the cross-roads outside each village was a pile of horns and other magic objects—horns which many missionaries had tried unsuccessfully for years to remove and forbid.

The cause of the success of this movement is therefore of considerable interest, the more so since it is in many ways typical of many such organizations of witch-finders which have sprung up in other parts of Africa. We have to ask ourselves first, then, why the methods of the *Bamucapi* appealed to the natives so strongly? To what fears did they seem to provide such an immediate and universal panacea? These are questions that cannot be answered by a study of the ritual and myths of the *Bamucapi* as an end in themselves. To assess the strength of the movement in any particular area we have to consider it against a background of tribal structure and belief.

In the Bemba country, for instance, it may be said that novelty was enough to account for the success of any native movement, religious or secular. The Babemba are known to be unusually credulous and unstable in temperament, the first to adopt and discard anything new. Nyasaland, the reputed home of the movement, has also a high reputation among Rhodesian natives as the land of high wages and educational facilities, and most of the clerks employed in the country are still of Nyasaland origin. Further, the Babemba are among those African peoples with whom every form of Europeanism is a positive cult. The *Bamucapi* appealed because they presented a dogma that

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essential part of the native system of fixing guilt, can no longer be publicly practised. It exists, but is discredited, and in this transition stage its loss has certainly robbed the native of some of his old moral certainties.

Further, with alterations in the sanctions for the power of the chief —his wealth, military supremacy, and the belief in his supernatural powers—that attitude to authority, on which, as we saw, tribal morality so largely depended, has been rudely shaken, and with it the whole system of beliefs in supernatural punishment for wrong-doing. Some natives are abandoning tribal rules because they find them burdensome; and some are living in conditions where it is impossible to carry them out—perhaps working at a mine too far to be able to care for their kinsmen or to carry out certain religious rites. Other natives again, many of them Christians, are caught between clashing moralities. In either case the majority are suffering, I believe, from a perpetual sense of guilt, expressing itself in a constant anxiety for some kind of supernatural defence. Nowhere did I feel this more strongly than in the most civilized part of Northern Rhodesia, the copper belt. Here a Bemba woman no longer feels it necessary to keep the wearisome taboos for the protection of her household fire, but just for that reason she feels herself bound to pay as much as she can for protective charms to save the life of her child—'just in case'. The influence of wage-earning is here again all-powerful. Money seems to the urban native his only asset in this insecure world. By it he can in effect exchange a belief in a system of ancestral spirits who demand respect, the performance of exacting ceremonial, and the keeping of tribal morality for safety bought on a hard cash basis open to all who have money, whatever their position in the society. What wonder, then, that he rushes to the seller of charms? And wherever protective magic is freely bought and sold there is an atmosphere of mutual suspicion between individuals. The fear of witchcraft increases, and witch-finders flourish.

Again, social grouping has been altered by white contact, with, as a transition stage, new causes of hostility between the individual components. In villages near European settlements, natives from other areas have intruded on original kinship units because they want to live near their work. 'We don't feel safe in this village. There are so many strangers here', an old woman said to me in a village near

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Kasama. In the mines it is the tribal admixture which is, I believe, at the basis of the natives' positive obsession by the fear of witchcraft. Each tribe credits the other with absolutely diabolical powers. Paralysed by the fear of the unknown, what can they do but buy more charms? Moreover, wage-earning in a large industrial undertaking provides opportunity for advance through individual initiative, and hence jealousy is rife. I know few successful clerks raised above the heads of their fellows who have not been accused at one time or another of sorcery. 'How else did he gain the bwana's favour?' is the natural question. And it is in the ranks of such men that, paradoxically enough, the most money is spent in the purchase of protective charms. I know of one ex-Government clerk in the Kasama area who had spent a Government bonus of £15 on the purchase of protective magic from a neighbouring tribe. Jealousy of the man who has adapted himself more quickly than his fellows to Europeanism is, I believe, inevitable in this transition stage.

Here, then, we must leave our study of the *Bamwaipi* movement. We have seen that part of the success of these charlatans was due to their clever blend of the old and the new, and I believe that such a combination will be almost invariably found in modern witch-finder movements. Added to this we must reckon the cleverness of a technique that drew from a village its harmless as well as its dangerous horns, and by the multiplicity of charms thus produced increased the sense of the risk the whole community had run. An analysis of the horns collected led us to doubt the existence of sorcerers proper in the community, a doubt confirmed by a study of Bemba belief as to the supernatural causes of death and disaster. But native belief in witchcraft, and the widespread use of protective magic and counter-charms of all kinds, was confirmed. This latter I believe to have been actually increased by contact with the white civilization, and the resultant economic and social changes in Northern Rhodesia. Hence follows the success of modern movements of witch-finders, movements which are, I believe, inevitable as a product of violent changes in tribal organization and belief.

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